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Witchcraft, magic and superstition in England, 1640-70.

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WITCHCRAFT, MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION IN
ENGLAND, 1640-1670

PhD Thesis

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Abstract of Thesis

This thesis examines the relationship between élite and popular beliefs in witchcraft, magic and superstition in England. In particular, these issues are considered against the background of political, religious and social upheaval characteristic of the Civil War, Interregnum and Restoration periods. Throughout the work it is stressed that deeply held superstitions were fundamental to belief in witches, the devil, ghosts, apparitions and supernatural healing. In addition the way such superstitions were used by both political and religious authorities is examined. Despite the fact that popular superstitions were often condemned, it was recognised that their propaganda value was too useful to ignore. A host of pamphlets and treatises was published during this period unashamedly incorporating such beliefs. The employment of demonic imagery and language in such polemics may not have been officially sanctioned, but it had the advantage of at least being easily understood and recognised by most people.

The work is divided into an introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion and three appendices. Chapter 1 looks at the religious and political background to witchcraft belief and justifies the period chosen. Chapter 2 analyses the demonological literature of the period and assesses the influence of the devil on people's consciousness, including how the devil was portrayed and what was known of his powers. Chapter 3 examines the way in which reports of the supernatural, such as ghosts, apparitions and monstrous births, were interpreted as prodigies and utilised for religious or political purposes. Chapter 4 assesses the role, influence and methods of unofficial healers, particularly cunning folk and white witches, and examines how they came into conflict with their patients, official practitioners of medicine and the prevailing religious authorities. Chapter 5 is concerned with the legal problems inherent in witchcraft trials, especially the influence the populace may have had on the judicial process. Chapter 6 consists of a local study of a number of episodes of witchcraft, concentrating on Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Somerset. Chapter 7 assesses why people made allegations of witchcraft, and, more importantly, why people may have confessed to witchcraft. The three appendices provide respectively: quantitative data on individual witches gleaned from all the sources examined, an explanation of sympathetic magic, the principles and beliefs concerning humoural medicine.

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Glossary

Devil	The personification of supreme evil. When used in the plural, 'devils' means fiends, imps, demons etc.
Devil's Mark	<i>Stigmata diaboli</i> . Often confused with the witch's mark (a protuberance on the body from which the familiar gained sustenance). The devil's mark resembled a birth mark. It was generally thought to be insensitive and did not bleed.
Familiar	Sometimes called 'imp'. Exclusive to England and Scotland. A low ranking demon given by the devil to the witch, usually taking the form of a small domestic animal. The term was first officially mentioned in the Witchcraft Act of 1604.
Incubus	Believed to have been an angel who had fallen from Heaven because of a lust for women. A lecherous demon who sought to corrupt women into following the devil through the act of sexual intercourse. See also <i>Succubus</i> .
Lycanthropy	Arose out of hallucinations and a sadistic craving for blood. Its features were: transformation into an animal; nocturnal excursions into the countryside; attacks on animals and humans to devour their flesh; retransformation into human form.
Maleficium	Misfortunes, injuries and calamities suffered by persons or animals with no apparent explanation. Often attributed to the malice of witches.
Metamorphosis	The belief that humans could change shape into animal form.
Poltergeist	A German word, deriving from spirit (geist) that makes a noise or uproar (polter).
Pricking	To detect the witch's mark. A long pin was stuck in the mark and if no pain was felt and there was no bleeding then this was used as proof that the suspect was a witch.
Sabbath	A parody of Christian rites. An assembly of witches presided over by the devil or a demon.
Scratching	A minor form of torture practised on a witch in order to cure the person bewitched.
Sorcery	Differentiated from witchcraft. A timeless belief in the ability that man could control nature to produce good or evil results, often aided through incantations, spells or spirits. The witch might engage in sorcery, but also contracts with the devil.

Succubas	A devil in a female form. Specialised in seducing men. See also <i>Incubus</i> .
Swimming	A form of ordeal in which a suspected witch was immersed in water in order to determine his or her guilt.
Wax images	Used to sympathetically harm the person it represented. See also Appendix 2.
White witch	A witch who practised sorcery which was beneficial.
Witch's mark	The extra breast or nipple from which it was believed the familiar suckled from. Sometimes called the 'teat' or 'bigg'.

Abbreviations

Ashm.	Ashmole MSS (Bodleian Library).
BL	British Library.
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic.</i>
CUL	Cambridge University Library.
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography.</i>
ERO	Essex Record Office.
Friends	Friends House Library.
MRO	Middlesex Record Office.
NRO	Norfolk Record Office.
PRO	Public Record Office.
SRO	Somerset Record Office.
Su.RO	Suffolk Record Office.
TT	Thomason Tracts.
Wellcome	Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines popular belief in witchcraft, magic and superstition from 1640 to 1670. It seeks to explain why witchcraft prosecution enjoyed a revival during this period, when earlier indications would seem to demonstrate it was on the decline.¹ It is argued that the rise of witchcraft belief was linked to the peculiar circumstances prevalent in this period. Immediately prior to the civil war, and certainly during the war itself, existing social, political, judicial and religious structures either changed radically or broke down. The 1640s saw the widespread collapse of long-established institutions on an unprecedented scale. Star Chamber, the Court of High Commission, the Councils of Wales and the North were all abolished before the end of 1641. Episcopacy and church courts followed in 1646, the House of Lords three years later. The Earl of Strafford (1641) and the Archbishop of Canterbury (1645) were executed; and then, in 1649, the King was tried and suffered the same fate.²

The collapse of the personal rule of Charles I, and the failure of Crown and Parliament to reach a settlement, provided an opportunity for many people to settle their grievances with landlords. Enclosure riots took place in 26 English counties between 1640-4. The Fens experienced rioting against enclosure and drainage works as fenlanders tried to reclaim lost common lands.³ Apprentices, affected by the dislocation of the cloth trade, rioted in many towns. Moreover, there was widespread opposition to the payment of tithes, with tithe barns and manorial records being burned.⁴ In addition the civil war transformed the practice of local government. Many men, who before the war would have been barred from positions of local power because of their social background, now found themselves occupying senior posts

¹ See Chp. 1.

² B. Reay, 'Radical Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction', in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. 4.

³ K. Lindley, *Fenland Riots and the English Revolution* (London, 1982), chps. 3-4, *passim*.

⁴ J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces* (London, 1976), p. 34; C. Hibbert, *Cavaliers and Roundheads. The English at War 1642-1649* (London, 1994), pp. 37-64, *passim*.

within county committees previously held by pre-war élites.⁵ These new county committees were empowered to summon wayward ministers and politically suspect landlords and then deprive them respectively of their parishes and their lands. Ordinary parishioners often found they were required to testify before such committees against their former superiors. In Suffolk only 7 out of 400 deponents summoned to give evidence to the county committee had their occupations described as 'gentlemen'. In Essex only 2 out of 250, and in Norfolk only 2 out of 90 were so described.⁶ In addition the social upheaval caused by the war together with the collapse of censorship provided ample opportunity for the emergence of various religious sects and cults.⁷ Towards the end of the 1640s and especially during the Interregnum, groups such as the Brownists, Diggers, Levellers, Muggletonians and Ranters were well established and many supported their cause in print.⁸ The growth of radical new religious sects together with the social upheaval prevalent during the 1640s also provided the impetus for the emergence of the Quaker movement during the Interregnum. Many of its members had in the 1640s been in conflict with landlords over their opposition to excessive rents and manorial services; others had been refusing to pay tithes.⁹ According to one estimate, by the end of the 1650s there were 35,000 to 40,000 Quakers, perhaps as many as 60,000. They were as numerous as the Catholics, more numerous than the Fifth Monarchists and Baptists.¹⁰ Running

⁵ J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces*, pp. 118-120.

⁶ I. Green, 'The Persecution of "Scandalous" and "Malignant" Parish Clergy during the English Civil War', *English Historical Review* (1979), p. 518.

⁷ N. Tyacke, 'Puritanism, Arminianism and Counter-Revolution', in C. Russell, ed., *The Origins of the English Civil War* (London, 1973), passim; C. Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (London, 1990), pp. 83-160, passim; B. Coward, *Social Change and Continuity in Early Modern England 1550-1750* (London, 1988), pp. 93-6.

⁸ C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972); A. L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters* (London, 1970). On the Diggers see: D. W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War* (London, 1940), p. 144; D. P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell* (London, 1964). On the Muggletonians see: H. Ellis, *Pseudochristus* (London, 1650), pp. 32, 37; L. Muggleton, *The Acts of the Witnesses* (London, 1699), p. 19.

⁹ B. G. Blackwood, 'Agrarian Unrest and the Early Lancashire Quakers', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* (1995), vol. li, pp. 72-6; B. Reay, 'Quaker Opposition to Tithes, 1652-1660', *Past and Present*, 86 (1980), pp. 100, 103-4.

¹⁰ B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society', in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. 141.

parallel with this social and religious upheaval was an increased belief in the potency, power and influence of the devil and witchcraft.

Perhaps of greater importance, the civil war allowed Englishmen and women to make up their minds which side they were to fight for and the leaders of both sides had to win their support.¹¹ This was increasingly achieved through the publication of pamphlets, tracts and news sheets. Following the removal of censorship in 1640 - which had hitherto prevented the publication of all but the most harmless of tracts - the country became inundated with news from a wide variety of sources. Between 1641 and 1642 there was an astonishing increase in the volume of news and propaganda: the first English newspapers, the publication of speeches by leading political figures, whether licensed or not, and the concoction of didactic pamphlets appealing to particular interest groups such as the London artisans or the provincial gentry. Over 20,000 titles were collected by the bookseller George Thomason, of which 5,000 appeared in 1642 alone.¹² Many of these accounts attacked or defended existing popular beliefs in witchcraft, ghosts, monstrous births and apparitions, by interpreting them in relation to the troubles of the period. All shades of opinion represented themselves as occupying the middle ground, and emphasised their own moderation in contrast to the 'schematics and atheists' or 'papists and malignants' who opposed them.¹³

Women too were more involved in vocal discord. Although it may have been true that the Puritans with their denunciation of wife beating and churching had helped to raise the status of women, if the wife was a partner she was still an inferior one. According to Keith Thomas, many believed that to question the natural order of the family was to question the will of God, and in this sense the patriarchal system was reinforced under Puritanism. Despite this in the separatist sects women as well as

¹¹ J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces*, pp. 42-51, passim; C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars* (London, 1992), pp. 45-65, passim.

¹² G. K. Fortescue, *Catalogue of the Pamphlets ... collected by George Thomason, 1640-61* (London, 1908).

¹³ J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces* (London, 1976), p. 35.

men had to give proof of their individual regeneration.¹⁴ Often women would predominate in such congregations. At a Norwich meeting in 1645, there were 31 men and 83 women in the congregation.¹⁵ Many women joined the Quaker movement and were able to preach and participate in church government. According to the findings of Barry Reay, of the 300 Quakers in trouble for disrupting ministers during the period 1654 to 1659, 34 per cent were women; of the 59 Quaker ministers who arrived in America during the period 1656 to 1663, 45 per cent were women.¹⁶

At the same time the collapse of censorship allowed women to write and publish tracts often of a political nature. As has been pointed out by John Walter this could involve mobilising support for the Levellers. By 1649, *The Humble Petition of Divers Well-Affected Women* justified women's new role: 'We are assured of our creation in the image of God, and of an interest in Christ, equal unto men, as also of a proportionable share in the Freedoms of this Commonwealth'.¹⁷ Women were also concerned to express their anxieties concerning the social effects of the Civil War. In 1643 a group of London midwives petitioned Parliament to end the war because of the decrease in childbirth caused by men being away fighting.¹⁸

The anxieties felt by many people during the civil war and the unpredictability of events in a time of revolution increased the demand for printed auguries about the future or of the condition of loved ones fighting far away. The astrologer William Lilly's case books contain many examples of wives seeking to know whether their husbands were dead or alive. Long after the fighting had stopped the enquiries continued to pour in. In July 1649 a baker's wife asked after her husband, who had

¹⁴ K. Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects', *Past and Present* (April, 1958), 13, pp. 42-65.

¹⁵ J. Browne, *History of Congregationalism and Memorials of the Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London, 1877), p. 254n; G. B. Harrison, ed., *The Church Book of Bunyan Meeting 1650 - 1821* (London, 1928), pp. 1-2; cited in K. Thomas, 'Women and the Civil War Sects'.

¹⁶ B. Reay, 'Quakerism and Society', in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay, eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 144-5.

¹⁷ J. Walter, 'The Impact on Society: A World Turned Upside Down?' in J. S. Morrill, ed., *The Impact of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), p. 115.

¹⁸ *The mid-wives just Petition* (London, 1643), sgns. A2-3.

left to be a soldier in 1643, and was informed he had died 5 years previously.¹⁹ In addition astrologers were inundated with questions concerning the most propitious side to support - King or Parliament.²⁰ Lilly was consulted by Mr Whitely who wanted to know if it was safe for his son to go to war; Captain Willoughby wondered if he should stay in the service or seek civilian employment.²¹

As well as the widespread dissemination of political and religious tracts during this period, there was also an unprecedented number of learned treatises published on the subject of witchcraft. Such publications were consistent with a widespread debate amongst the intellectual élite on the potency of magic, astrology, sympathetic cures, and a host of other ancillary topics.²² These treatises often utilised such beliefs in order to popularise particular religious or political ideologies. Many of the pamphlets which had attacked the notion of female preachers had associated their actions with imagery which deliberately pandered to the superstitions of the time - some writers even connected such schisms with delusions of Satan.²³ Other sects were directly compared with witchcraft, especially Baptists and Quakers.²⁴ As a result the superstitious tensions in rural communities, which had always existed, could now be legitimised and be channelled in the persecution of witches. One manifestation of this was the helplessness the legal authorities often felt in the face of popular hostility to a

¹⁹ Ashm. 210, f. 100, cited in Thomas, *Religion*, p. 366.

²⁰ Ibid. 184, f. 3.

²¹ C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars* (London, 1992), p. 45.

²² For examples of the numbers of pamphlets printed on these subjects between 1640 and 1670 - see the Bibliography.

²³ Examples include: T. Edwards, *Antapologia: Or, a full answer to the Apologeticall Narration* (London, 1644); J. A. Brinsley, *Looking-Glasse for Good Women* (London, 1645); *A Discovery of Six Women Preachers* (London, 1641); *A Spirit moving in the Womens Preachers* (London, 1641); W. Prynne, *A Fresh Discovery of some Prodigious New Wandering-Blasing-Stars, & Firebrands* (London, 1645); K. Chidley, *The Justification of the Independent Churches of Christ* (London, 1641).

²⁴ Attacking Baptists: BL, TT E 1833 (2), *The Snare of the Devil discovered: Or, a true and perfect Relation of the sad and deplorable condition of Lydia the wife of John Rogers* (London, 1658); BL, TT E 113 (15), *A strange and lamentable accident that happened lately at Mears Ashby in Northamptonshire* (London, 1642). Attacking Quakers: R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits*, pp. 175-6; BL, TT E 835 (10), *The Quakers terrible vision; Or, The Devils Progress to the City of London* (London, 1655), pp. 3-4; BL 855. f. 7(1), *Quakers are Inchanters and dangerous Seducers. Appearing in their Inchantment of one Mary White at Wickham-skeyth in Suffolk, 1655* (London, 1655).

particular person.²⁵ This does not mean witches were prosecuted and found guilty because of popular opinion, just that they were often brought before the courts in the first place by such a process. English law was still very much based on the common law accusatorial system, and mob retribution could often be justified on these grounds. As early as the twelfth century, anyone convicted of murder by *maleficium* could be handed over to the victim's family for punishment.²⁶ Thus while it is evident that elite attitudes helped to encourage witchcraft accusation at the popular level, it would be erroneous to attribute the rise in witchcraft persecution during the English revolutionary period solely to such a change.

However, at the outset a number of limitations need to be identified in addressing the question of witchcraft between 1640-70. Firstly, it is difficult to find evidence of direct government involvement in such accusations during this time. This is not to say that central government ignored such cases, but it became increasingly impotent in the face of the revival of such beliefs. In 1646 a tentative attempt was made to impose some sort of restriction on the witch hunting methods of Mathew Hopkins. A special Commission of Oyer and Terminer was granted in London for the trial of witches following the sensational discovery of the Suffolk witch, John Lowes.²⁷ The Commission stressed that care was needed in the gathering of evidence and that confessions should be voluntary. One of the first things done by the court was to put an end to swimming (the method used by Hopkins to detect John Lowes). However, the appointment to the special court of Samuel Fairclough and Edmund Calamy (the elder), both of them nonconformist Suffolk clergy and strict Puritans, along with Sergeant Godbolt and the two JPs Sir Harbottle Grimston and Sir Thomas Bowes, meant that it was of a staunchly godly character. Perhaps the Commission was genuinely concerned about the methods employed by Mathew Hopkins, but it

²⁵ See below, pp. 176-83, *passim*.

²⁶ *Legis Regis Henrici, cap 71.*, in B. Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England* (London, 1840), cited in N. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons* (New York, 1975), p. 150.

²⁷ S. Clark, *Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons* (London, 1683), p. 172.

seems more likely that they wished to impose some sort of centralised control over his activities. Thus, although Parliament recognised that special care was needed in obtaining the evidence, it by no means condemned the practice of witch-hunting. In fact it has been noted by R. Trevor Davies that the appointment of the divines, Samuel Fairclough and Edmund Calamy, to assist the JPs shows that they were perfectly willing to support further witch hunts, as both men were noted for the strength of their convictions about witchcraft.²⁸ In addition the attitude of the Long Parliament towards witchcraft could hardly be more explicitly expressed than in the General Act of Pardon and Oblivion (24 Feb. 1651/2). It specifically exempted from pardon 'all offences of Invocations, Conjurations, Witchcrafts, Sorceries, Inchantments and Charms; and all offences of procuring, abetting or comforting the same; and all persons now Attainted or Convicted of the said offences'.²⁹ However, it would be disingenuous to conclude that central government was the moving force behind witchcraft persecutions, simply from these two examples. Usually the initiative seems to have come from the popular level. Whether it progressed any further often depended on the scepticism of the presiding JP or Judge.

Secondly, many of the pamphlets analysed in this work contain accounts of supernatural phenomena and stories which are at best of doubtful authenticity and at worst blatant lies. Therefore it is necessary to exercise caution when analysing some of the more popular pamphlet accounts. As has been pointed out by Joad Raymond, often the authors of such works were not particularly learned men. In addition, the process of editing meant that accounts purporting to be contemporaneous copies were often in practice shortened and sometimes wholly re-written. Indeed contemporaries often criticised the reliability of the content and the lack of eloquence of the writing style of such pamphlets.³⁰ It is hardly surprising therefore that the objective

²⁸ R. T. Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch Belief* (London, 1947), p. 145.

²⁹ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-60* (London, 1911), vol. ii, p. 569.

³⁰ J. Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper, English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 129, 141-44, 280-313.

interpretation of the numerous tracts published during this period must have proved extremely difficult. In 1642 the London artisan, Nehemiah Wallington, woefully commented that the piles 'of these little pamphlets of weekly news about my house ... were so many thieves that have stolen away my money before I was aware of them'.³¹ However, it would be a mistake to dismiss popular pamphlets out of hand. Their contribution to historical knowledge is not whether they might be true or not, or whether contemporary people believed them; their importance lies in what they have to tell us about the beliefs and superstitions of the time. For example, it may be the case that astrologers were viewed by many people with suspicion and their predictions with scepticism. However, this did not stop the authorities from utilising almanacs as propaganda weapons during the English Civil War.³² Thus it is not only the beliefs of contemporaries that is important. Equal consideration must be given to the way in which printed accounts of witchcraft trials, portents, apparitions, ghosts and miraculous healing were used by the authorities. In addition, the popularity of such sources, coupled with the widespread religious and political changes that emerged during the revolutionary period, indicates a shift in public opinion.

Such issues are analysed in depth in this thesis, especially the demonological arguments surrounding the mythology of the devil. The importance of these debates in relation to witchcraft belief was that it was believed the devil was able to commune with mankind. The problem arose in seeking to explain how he achieved this. Could he commune directly with a witch, or did he have to do so through another creature?³³ Linked to these debates was an attempt to interpret and explain the entomology of the spirit world as well as the devil. Was the devil an in-corporeal spirit or did he consist of a corporeal body? Did the same apply to ghosts? Had they been sent by God or the

³¹ P. S. Seaver, *Wallington's World* (London, 1985), p. 156.

³² B. Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press, English Almanacs 1500-1800* (London, 1979), pp. 23-4, 72.

³³ See Chp. 2.

devil? Such questions arose originally from popular pamphlets often written so they could be interpreted as prodigies, and developed into full-blown academic debates.³⁴

The main intention of this work is not to explain why the élite may or may not have wanted to instigate the prosecution of witches, but how and why popular belief in magic, supernatural events and divine intervention could result in the prosecution of a witch. This is particularly the case with regard to white witches, cunning folk and the host of unofficial healers who plied their trade in seventeenth-century England. Many of these healers came into conflict with their patients because their cures failed, just as they came into conflict with the godly because their cures were not perceived as coming from God.³⁵ Popular superstition and folk beliefs could also develop into hostility and public disorder, despite growing legal scepticism. JPs may have felt impotent in the face of widespread local hostility against a particularly unpopular local figure.³⁶ Many cases like this crop up in the examinations and depositions of witches at the assizes. These are particularly abundant at Ely, Suffolk and Norfolk in 1645-6, and in Somerset in 1664. In the case of the quarter sessions records at Ely the depositions of many of the accused witches survive in full. These tell us much about the long-standing hostilities that existed in many isolated rural communities, as well as the methods employed by the self-styled 'Witchfinder General', Mathew Hopkins, in rooting out witchcraft.³⁷

Despite the efforts of Hopkins, many witches confessed to their crimes voluntarily without any evidence of torture, while many victims of witchcraft also admitted to fabricating allegations of witchcraft. To the modern reader the idea of a person confessing to something which would result in his or her death may seem absurd. However, there are many modern precedents for this in the field of psychological research.³⁸ In addition it is clear from the evidence that many suspected

³⁴ See Chp. 3.

³⁵ See Chp. 4.

³⁶ See Chp. 5.

³⁷ See Chp. 6.

³⁸ See Chp. 7.

witches were tolerated within their communities for many years prior to their prosecution. Thus they only found themselves in trouble with their community when the circumstances enabled an accusation to be made without fear of retribution. Such conditions were on the decline after the Restoration, partly due to the relative political stability arising out of the return of Church, Crown and Parliament and the increasing scepticism amongst the legal profession with regard to witchcraft.³⁹ However, prior to 1640 there appears to have been equal scepticism among the judiciary and witchcraft could be said to be firmly in decline. It is to this issue that the first chapter is addressed.

³⁹ See Conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

The Background to Witchcraft, Magic and Superstition

In 1633 a young lad named Edward Robinson, from Pendle in Lancashire, testified to the justices at Lancaster how he had stumbled upon a witches coven. While walking around his home village he came across a pair of greyhounds which he knew belonged to one of the villagers. The two hounds were wearing collars and leashes, so he decided to take them to course for hares. After he had led them out of the village he saw a hare and urged the greyhounds to chase it, but they refused. Becoming angry, he tied the hounds to a nearby bush and beat them with a stick. As he did so, the black greyhound immediately transformed into a woman and stood up: she was 'Dickenson's wife', a neighbour of the boy. The brown greyhound then transformed into a boy whom he did not know. At this point he attempted to run away, but the woman stopped him. She put her hand in her pocket and pulled out a piece of silver and offered it to him 'to hold his Tongue, and not tell; which he refused, saying *Nay, thou art a Witch*'. She put her hand in her pocket again and removed a bridle which she put over the head of the boy who was with her, after which he then 'stood up in the likeness of a White Horse'. Dickenson's wife then took Robinson on the horse to a new house called '*Hoarstones*', about a quarter of a mile away. Many other people were there and more were arriving on different coloured horses. In the house there were about 60 persons gathered around a fire, over which meat was roasting.

After a while some of the company made their way to an adjoining barn and Robinson followed them. He saw 6 of them kneeling and pulling ropes which were fastened to the top of the barn. As Robinson watched he saw 'Flesh smoaking, Butter in lumps, and Milk as it were flying from the said Ropes. All which fell into Basons which were placed under the said Ropes'. Others came in and repeated the same action with an identical result. At this point he ran off. The people in the house immediately realised they were missing one of their number and so came out to look for him. Eventually he met with two horsemen and at the sight of them his pursuers

gave up the chase. However, amongst those chasing him he had recognised some neighbours which made him worry for his safety. One was Loind's wife and one Jannet Davies.

When he returned to his father he saw Loind's wife sitting on a cross-piece of wood in the chimney of his home. He called to her but she immediately vanished. He was then sent out on an errand by his father and met with a boy in a field. He got into a quarrel with him and had his ears and face injured during the subsequent fight. When he looked down at the boy's feet, he noticed one of them was cloven. As he fled the field he saw a lantern, but when he got there he saw a woman standing on a bridge whom he knew to be Loind's wife. He turned from her and immediately met with the boy again who gave him a blow. Finally he testified that when he had been in the barn he had seen three women take 6 'Pictures from the Beam, in which Pictures were many Thorns'. One of these women was Loind's wife. When he was asked if he knew any of the others, he answered that one was Dickinson's wife, and he could identify by sight 18 others. As a result of his testimony the suspected witches were apprehended and the boy, together with his father, attended all the local churches in order to identify the other people who had been present at the coven. For doing this they received payment. At the assizes at Lancaster 17 were found guilty by the jury, but the judge, not being satisfied with the testimony, had them reprieved.¹

Charles I and his council had been informed of the Pendle case by the presiding judge and as a result appointed the bishop of Chester to examine the circumstances surrounding the incident. In addition 4 of the suspected witches were sent to London. It was now that the whole case was challenged, especially the trustworthiness of the boy's testimony. The 4 suspected witches were examined by the King's physicians and surgeons and after by the Council: 'and no Cause of Guilt appearing, but great Presumptions of the Boy's being suborned to accuse them falsely; it was resolved to

¹ F. Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft. With observations upon Matters of Fact, tending to clear the Texts of the Sacred Scriptures, and confute the vulgar Errors about that point* (London, 1718), pp. 212-17; *The Boy of Bilson* (London, 1620), Passim.

separate the Boy from his father, and put them in several Prisons'. Soon after this the Boy confessed that he was taught and encouraged to feign those 'Things by his Father, and some others, whom Envy, Revenge, and hope of Gain had prompted'. In addition a team of 10 London midwives and a panel of physicians led by William Harvey (the physician to Charles I) examined the women. They declared one of the suspects had unusual marks (but explicable), while on the other three they found 'nothing unnatural neyther in the secrets or any other partes of their bodyes, not anything lyke a teate or marke, nor any signe that any such thinge haith ever beene'.² Having exposed the fraudulent nature of the accusations, those convicted were all acquitted.

This case has been narrated at length because it illustrates the scepticism prevalent during the 1630s concerning accounts of witchcraft and the willingness of central government to become involved in the judicial process. While it may at first seem untypical of early modern witchcraft cases, it was in fact a culmination of a long line of false accusations exposed by central government during the first 40 years of the seventeenth century. In 1597 a William Somers alleged he had been bewitched and possessed by the devil. Over a period of time the exorcist, John Darrell, was able to convince people of this and attempted to exorcise the evil spirits from Somers. However, the boy later confessed to faking the fits and incriminated Darrell, who denied any complicity. Darrell was eventually condemned as a counterfeiter by a court consisting of the Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr Whitgift) and the Bishop of London (Dr Bancroft).³ Darrell was not punished, but this case resulted in the ruling of Canon 72 of the new Church Canons of 1604 which forbade the exorcising of evil spirits.⁴ In 1614 at Leicester the testimony of a 13 year-old boy, John Smith, resulted in the execution of 9 persons. But James I ordered an investigation, discovered his

² J. Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), pp. 276-8.

³ J. Darrell, *An Apology or Defense of the Possession of William Somers* (London, 1599); *A Brief Narration* (London, 1599); *A Brief Apology* (London, 1599), passim.

⁴ C. H. Davis, *The English Church Canons of 1604* (London, 1869), pp. 71-2.

imposture and ordered the release of those still in jail.⁵ In 1612 the justices at Lancaster, under the direction of Sir Edward Bromley, acquitted Jennet Bierly, Jane Southworth and Ellen Bierly of witchcraft after they ruled that the accused had been falsely accused by their local priest.⁶ Likewise in 1620 the 'Bilson Boy', William Perry, was exposed as a fraud by Bishop Morton, after he had faked possession and accused others of witchcraft.⁷ By contrast we do not see another case of proven counterfeiting of bewitchment until 1690, when Richard Hathaway was exposed by Lord Chief Justice Holt.⁸

One conclusion which can be drawn from these cases is that central government and the judiciary were becoming increasingly concerned during the 1630s about the numbers of witches prosecuted on such unreliable and tenuous evidence. There was particular concern over the reliability of panels of local folk, many of whom had a particular axe to grind against unpopular figures in their communities.⁹ In addition it was increasingly recognised that a conviction based solely on the evidence of young children was absurd.¹⁰ Analysis of prosecutions for witchcraft at the assizes indicate that the latter years of Elizabeth I's reign marked the climax. In Essex, which has been studied in detail, while between 1580 and 1680 5 per cent of all criminal proceedings at the assizes were for witchcraft, the 1580s and 1590s record a peak of indictments.¹¹ Although the subsequent decline may not have been due to the belief that the testimony of children was unreliable, this does seem probable, especially when one considers that those opposing the prosecution of witches were pitching their

⁵ F. Osborne, *Miscellaneous Works* (London, 1722), vol. i, pp. 29-31; *Miscellany of Sundry Essays* (London, 1659), pp. 6-9.

⁶ J. Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), pp. 275-6.

⁷ F. Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft*, p. 223.

⁸ R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691), pp. 74-8.

⁹ J. Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience touching Witchcrafts* (London, 1646), pp. 194-5.

¹⁰ R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand jurymen* (London, 1627), p. 29.

¹¹ A. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), pp. 28-30. See Appendix 1 for a regional breakdown of the number of witches.

arguments not on the premise that witches did not exist, but that too many people were being prosecuted on unreliable testimony.¹²

As well as the increasingly sceptical attitude expressed by many people about the reliability of witnesses in witchcraft trials, the power of the devil was also challenged. It was argued by many writers during the early seventeenth century that the devil imparted no real power to witches, but merely persuaded them into thinking they had power. Thus it followed that witches did not really exist except in the imagination. The devil had merely persuaded people into thinking they were witches. Many of these arguments supported those of James VI of Scotland who had argued that the devil was unable to perform miracles or overrule the powers of nature, but instead produced miraculous effects. The difference was that God was a creator, 'what he makes appeare in miracle, it is so in effect. As Moses rod being cast downe, was no doubt turned into a natural Serpant: Whereas the Devill (as God's Ape) counter-fetting that by his Magicians, maide their wandes appeare so, onelie to mennes outward senses'.¹³ This type of reasoning demonstrated one of the commonest themes of this period - the portrayal of the devil as the ultimate deceiver or illusionist - which in turn helps to account for the growing scepticism during the 1620s and 1630s about the testimony of witnesses. The devil persuaded his followers into thinking that they had the power to cause harm, when in fact his power was illusory.¹⁴ When the physician and author, John Cotta (1575?-1650?), explained why he could never believe in witchcraft despite the numbers of witches who had confessed to the offence, he did so in the context that witches had been beguiled by

¹² G. Gifford, *A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1603), sg. M²; J. Cotta, *A Short Discoverie of the Unobservable Dangers of several sorts of persons and unconsiderd Practisers of Physicke in England* (London, 1612), pp. 53-4, 57-8; R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen* (London, 1627), pp. 24-5; J. Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience concerning Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1646), pp. 4-6.

¹³ James VI, *Daemonologie* (London, 1597), pp. 22-3.

¹⁴ For a detailed analysis of the arguments of James vid: S. Clark, 'King James' Daemonologie: Witchcraft and Kingship', in S. Anglo, ed., *The Damned Art: Essays in the Literature of Witchcraft* (London, 1977), pp. 156-81; S. Clark, 'The Rational Witchfinder: conscience, demonological naturalism and popular superstitions', in S. Pumfry, P. L. Rossi, M. Slawinski, eds., *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe* (Manchester, 1991), p. 237.

the devil into thinking they could cause harm, when in fact they possessed no such power. It was not that he believed witches did not exist, rather he thought they had been deceived by the devil into thinking they were witches.¹⁵ Much the same was being preached in 1616 by Alexander Roberts, a clergyman from King's Lynn in Norfolk. For him the power of the witch came from the devil, but in order for this to happen three conditions had to be satisfied:

First, the permitting will of God. Secondly, the suggestion of the Divell, and his power cooperating. Thirdly, the desire and consent of the Sorcerer; and if any of these be wanting, no trick of witchcraft can be performed. For if God did not suffer it, neither the Divell, nor the Witch could prevaile to do anything, not so much as to hurt one bristle of a Swine.¹⁶

Likewise Richard Bernard (1568-1641), a divine writing in 1627, was keen to point out that the devil could only perform evil through God's will. The natural extension to this reasoning was that witches, who were the devil's servants, had no power to perform evil without God's leave. As with earlier writers, he argued that many of the deaths or illnesses attributed to witchcraft were often subsequently shown to be natural. Bernard advised the Gentlemen of the Grand Jury

To inquire whether hee hath taken advice of some learned Physicians, and hath also used their best helpes, for remedie, before they enter into consideration of the practices of witcherie: because unless the Witchcraft be very cleere, they may bee much mistaken; and better it were, till the truth appeare, to write an *Ignoramus*, then upon oath to set down *Billa vera*.¹⁷

Thus it would appear that the growing scepticism of the legal authorities to the problem of accepting certain types of testimony in witchcraft cases seems to have operated in conjunction with an equally critical movement amongst demonological writers. Such a movement would suggest that witchcraft prosecution, if not belief, was in decline by 1640.

¹⁵ J. Cotta, *A Short Discoverie of the Unobserved Dangers of severall sorts of ignorant and unconsiderat Practisers of Physicke in England* (London, 1612), pp. 69-70.

¹⁶ A. Roberts, *Treatise of Witchcraft* (London, 1616), p. 24.

¹⁷ R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen* (London, 1627), pp. 1, 4-5, 24-5.

The concept of superstition was fundamental to the widespread religious debates which took place amongst the godly during the seventeenth century. It is very easy to view such a word in its twentieth-century context, and by so doing fall into the trap of assuming people living in seventeenth-century England were backward and unsophisticated. This definition, with all its modern connotations, is not the one assumed in this thesis. In order to be absolutely clear about this it is necessary to define what is meant by the term 'superstition', as it is important to the overall argument of the work. Firstly, to assume the word was not used in the seventeenth century is wrong. However, it often simply meant unbelief in a deity or a lack of godliness, atheism even. Thus the divine Dr Nathaniel Holmes stated that the word 'antiChrist' signified '*all against Christ, and Superstition, to signifie all that is not according to the pure truth of the Word*'.¹⁸ The term was extremely wide-ranging and included belief in astrology, portents and ghosts, as well as the potency of witches.

Superstitious practices were still influential in spite of the Protestant Reformation and the condemnation by religious authorities of such beliefs as popish. In pre-Reformation times there had long been contiguity between the rituals of the Catholic Church and the superstitious and magical belief of the populace. Part of the success of Catholicism lay in its ability to adapt and neutralise the pagan beliefs of many communities. One consequence of this was that reformers had begun to criticise Catholicism itself as becoming pagan and idolatrous. As has been pointed out by Robert Scribner, this was to have a major effect on one of the most important functions of the Catholic church - the healing of the sick.¹⁹ In the Middle Ages in England, for example, there had been about 700 hospitals and about 200 Lazar houses (for looking after lepers). After the Reformation all the hospitals, apart from 2 outside

¹⁸ N. Holmes, *Plain Dealing, or the Cause and Cure of the Present Evils of the Times* (London, 1652), p. 31.

¹⁹ R. Scribner, 'The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the "Disenchantment of the World"', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxiii: 3 (Winter, 1993), pp. 481-2.

London and 5 within the capital, were sold off (because they had been church owned), and the responsibility for dealing with the ill was passed to the local parishes.²⁰

The problem was that many of the pre-Reformation monasteries had taken over the pagan powers of healing and when they were dissolved people still required healers; as a consequence they reverted to their old ways. When the Reformation removed such institutions people turned to lay and magical healers; thus the advent of Protestantism did not end superstitious beliefs. In addition belief in portents and apparitions as punishment for sin, and the debate concerning the existence of demons (demonology), earlier condemned by reformers as papist, was revived. As a result we see a revival of a belief in white witchcraft, astrology and in interpretations of portents sent by God, such as accounts of monstrous births and apparitions seen in the sky. Not surprisingly many of those who performed these interpretations became very powerful. They derived their power not only from the popular belief in such supernatural events, but also from the mysterious use of incantations and words, whether in the form of written charms or spells. Moreover, as no doubt often happened, when the power of words and charms actually worked, the church would have had little option but to claim such powers were demonic. It reasoned that in an age when miracles were supposed to have ceased, any such powers must have been granted by the devil. Protestants were able to follow Roman Catholic practice by monopolising ritual and so persecute witches.

The modern claim, that the power of the spoken word was held by the ignorant in some awe, is therefore worth considering.²¹ The popular belief that words were powerful and could be used to achieve both good and evil, was supported by many eminent philosophers. The belief enjoyed a partial revival with the re-emergence

²⁰ I am grateful to Dr A. Weir of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine for these figures.

²¹ Professor J. A. Sharpe has stressed that this was shown in popular hostility to swearing, and scolds. He suggests that suspected witches had often been previously dealt with as scolds: J. Sharpe, *Crime in Seventeenth Century England. A County study* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 156. This is also the case with male witches. Before the Suffolk witch John Lowes was finally tried and executed for witchcraft in 1645 he had previously been proceeded against for barratry in 1614 and also in 1641: C. E. Ewen, *The Trials of John Lowes, Clerk* (London, 1937), pp. 2, 5.

during the 1650s of a number of works on the Hermetic Cabalistic magic tradition first advocated by Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) during the fifteenth century.²² These works stressed that God had created the world through the use of the spoken word. Hebrew in particular was thought to contain the essence of this magic because it had been the language God had used to speak to Adam (a being made in the likeness of God). In addition the power of words was also widely recognised in a more conventional manner through prayer. For the godly, prayer and fasting were the only permissible means to deal with illness or calamity. To these ends the power of prayer was actively encouraged by Protestantism as the only way to salvation. The difficulty for many theologians was that if one's prayers actually worked and achieved the desired end, then it was easy to fall into the trap of thinking the power to do this came from the words themselves, rather than from God. Moreover, if it was accepted that prayer could be used for good ends, then it was also accepted that spoken words could be used for evil ends. It is hardly surprising, given these beliefs, that the curse was feared by many as a powerful spell which could genuinely cause harm. This fear applied not only to the curse spoken within hearing of the victim, but also to the curse uttered surreptitiously from a distance. Thomas Hobbes had argued during the 1650s that when God created the world His word had been so powerful that it had created non-living, incorporeal things like the Light, the Firmament and the Sun. This had also helped to explain how the power of God's word could be used to command the devil or a disease to leave the body. Hobbes had pointed out it did not matter whether such a body was corporeal or not, or whether it could physically hear the words spoken. The power of God's word was thought to be too great for it to resist.²³ Using this type of reasoning, one could explain the efficacy of written charms which invoked God's healing powers, even though they might have been written in a language which

²² Examples include: *Cabala, Mysteries of State, in letters of the great Ministers of K. James and K. Charles* (London, 1653); H. More, *Conjectura Cabbalistica. Or, a conjectural essay of interpreting the minde of Moses, according to a Threefold Cabbala: viz. literal, philosophical, mystical, or divinely moral* (London, 1653).

²³ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), 1973 repr., ed. K. R. Minogue, p. 35.

the wearer could not understand - the power came from invoking God's word and not from the magician.

The written word was believed by the illiterate to be even more powerful, especially if it contained mystical symbols. Such symbols were widely employed by charmers and cunning folk, in order to dupe the uneducated masses into thinking such writings had genuine powers.²⁴ The popular appeal and power of the written word was also recognised by the élite. The ritualistic methods used by the authorities to deal with the written word demonstrate this. Often political or theological works which were deemed subversive and therefore unacceptable were disposed of publicly in a way that guaranteed their total annihilation. The burning of seditious works by the common hangman ensured such works were taken out of circulation, using the same highly public, ritualistic methods employed in the execution of a felon. Such public displays helped to reinforce the unacceptability of publishing such works and the possible consequences for those that did.²⁵

In addition Puritan belief during the seventeenth century and especially during the revolutionary period exerted an enormous influence on everyday life. The godly strongly believed in a patriarchal hierarchy and there were many unofficial sanctions open to those who wished to enforce this view. Many of these were based on ancient pagan ceremonies which still remained popular in rural areas and amongst the less-educated. Joan Kent has argued that the crowds in skimmingtons tended to be of the lower rank and that the godly especially disliked such demonstrations, as they represented features of the old festive culture they were trying to suppress.²⁶ Alternatively those who took part in such ceremonies may have been a type of 'godly

²⁴ See Chp. 4.

²⁵ It has been argued, for example, that public executions were designed to instil fear, not just retribution. J. A. Sharpe, 'Last Dying Speeches', *Judicial Punishment in England* (London, 1990), Chp. 2, *passim*. Similar motivations may have been behind the public burning of seditious books.

²⁶ J. Kent, 'The English Village Constable', *Journal of British Studies*, xx, no. 2 (1981), pp. 38-9.

underclass', who objected to the more radical aims of the extremists but who still believed in a strong patriarchal society.²⁷

Such attitudes can be amply demonstrated by an examination of local court records during the English Civil War. The entries in the Ipswich court books for the years 1642 and 1643, enable us to understand how deeply Suffolk minds were imbued with the doctrines which regulated the actions of the godly. Thomas Pounsett was fined 12*d.* 'for playing at Cardes'; John Belt, a tailor, was put in prison 'for working on the Fast day'; a similar punishment was awarded to John Saunders, a butcher, 'for driving cattle on the Fast day'; and to Richard Lowe, a musician, 'for fidling on the Fast day at night'.²⁸ Failure to attend church could also result in imprisonment, as Henry and Susan Stott discovered when they were both sentenced to three months by the bailiffs at Ipswich sessions.²⁹ In addition the authorities in Suffolk seem to be especially concerned with those who cursed others or used profane or vulgar language. Robert Hemlye and Thomas Gallant were each fined £10 and £5 respectively for insulting a group of soldiers. Alexander Reynolds of Ipswich, a clerk, was bound over in the sum of £40 'for wordes concerning the Earl of Essex'; another clerk, Richard Coppinge of Claydon, was required to find the sum of £100 'for having scandalous verses'.³⁰

Strongly linked to the enforcement of godly morality was the pre-occupation with scolding. Such attitudes have been linked with the social and economic transformation that was occurring - the decline in neighbourly values and the spread of capitalism.³¹ However there were very few large scale manufacturers normally associated with the emergence of capitalism, and individual towns and villages were

²⁷ D. Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson, eds., *Order and Disorder in Early Modern England* (London, 1985), p. 134.

²⁸ Su.RO, MSS C8/4/7, f.70.

²⁹ Ibid., f. 68.

³⁰ Ibid., ff. 68-9.

³¹ D. Underdown, 'The Taming of the Scold: the Enforcement of Patriarchal Authority in Early Modern England', p. 126.

generally geared towards the subsistence of the local community. What seems more likely is that the patriarchal system was reinforced by Puritans because of the threat to family values. This is especially the case when women turned themselves to roles traditionally undertaken by men. One example of this was in preaching. In August 1641 the Venetian ambassador reported the spread of lay preaching and the appearance of women in the pulpits.³² In addition many pamphlets were published demonising the notion of female preachers by portraying them as mere delusions of Satan.³³ Female sectarians during the English Civil War were often depicted as witch figures. In *The Brownist Heresies Confuted*, published in 1641, a meeting similar to a witches sabbath is described, and a 'witty young gentlewoman' is seduced by a minister into joining the sect.³⁴ Another, John Paget's *An Arrow against Seperation of the Brownists*, described an oracle who received her inspiration 'namely not by her mouth only, but her belly being swollen, and she sitting upon the sacred stool ... then came the stinking oracle from under or out of the stool below'.³⁵ Many men felt that the increased assertiveness of women in sectarian groups was to blame for domestic upheaval. One astrological almanac informed readers that the meaning of a solar eclipse was the continuance of domestic wars: 'by the subtelty, cunning and plotting of a woman, or women rather; sectaries, sly knaves, witty and well spoken'.³⁶

Some female visionaries were respected: Elizabeth Poole, for example, preached to an audience of parliamentary soldiers in 1648, in terms challenging the accepted categories of female obedience:

It is true indeed (I know I appeal by the gift of God upon me) the King is your father and husband, which you were and are to obey in the

³² A. Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1979), p. 112.

³³ T. Edwards, *Antapologia: Or, a full answer to the Apologeticall Narration* (London, 1644); J. A. Brinsley, *Looking-Glasse for Good Women* (London, 1645); *A Discovery of Six Women Preachers* (London, 1641); *A Spirit moving in the Womens Preachers* (London, 1641); W. Prynne, *A Fresh Discovery of some Prodigious New Wandering-Blasing-Stars, & Firebrands* (London, 1645); K. Chidley, *The Justification of the Independent Churches of Christ* (London, 1641).

³⁴ *The Brownist Heresies Confuted* (London, 1641), pp. 1-2.

³⁵ J. Paget, *An Arrow Against the Seperation of the Brownists* (Amsterdam, 1618), p. 53., cited in P. Mack, *Visionary Women. Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1992), p. 48.

³⁶ W. Lilly, *Merlinus Anglicus Junior: The English Merlin Revised* (London, 1644), p. 6.

Lord, and in no other way, for when he forgot his subordination to divine faithhood and headship, thinking he had begotten you a generation to his own pleasure, and taking you a wife for his own lusts, thereby is the yoke taken from your necks.³⁷

This was acceptable because it agreed with Cromwell's policy. As Colonel Rich remarked: 'I cannot but give you that impression that is upon my Spirit in conjunction with that testimony which God hath manifested here by an unexpected Providence. What she hath said being correspondent with what I have made [known] as manifested to me before'.³⁸

During the 1650s the Quakers were particularly attacked by various pamphleteers on the grounds that they were demonic. Mary White, who listened to the preaching of the Quaker Edward Burrows, 'sometimes blared like a calf and sometimes did clasp her legs about her Neck', and afterwards brought charges of witchcraft against the Quakers.³⁹ In one pamphlet, published in 1659, the Quaker movement is specifically linked to witchcraft. It relates how one Mary Phillips, after attending a Quaker meeting and rejecting their beliefs, was bewitched by two men present there and transformed into a horse. She was returned to human form after the bit in her mouth inadvertently dropped out. Amazingly the two men accused of this witchcraft were charged and the Bill found to be a 'True Bill' (*Billa vera*) although they were both subsequently acquitted at the Cambridge assizes.⁴⁰

It was not only sectarian groups which were linked with witchcraft belief but also Catholics. This was especially the case during the English Civil War period. During the 30 years before the outbreak of the Civil War there had been a steady outpouring of demonological tracts stressing the limited power of the devil compared

³⁷ E. Poole, *A Vision: Wherein Is Manifested the Disease and Cure of the Kingdome* (London, 1648), p. 6.

³⁸ C. H. Firth, ed., *The Clarke Papers: Selections from the Papers of William Clarke* (Westminster, 1894), vol. ii, p. 152; C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), p. 224.

³⁹ *Quakers Are Inchanters, and Dangerous Seducers* (London, 1655), p. 1.

⁴⁰ *Strange & Terrible Newes From Cambridge Being a true Relation of the Quakers bewitching of Mary Phillips out of Bed from her Husband in the Night, and transformed her into the shape of a Bay Mare* (London, 1659), pp. 4-5.

with that of God.⁴¹ One of the reasons why so many Protestant divines may have thought it necessary to undermine popular belief in the power of the devil was not just that they thought it heretical, but because it was now associated with Catholicism. Nobody suggested that people were turning their backs on God in order to take part in cults which worshipped the devil. What they feared the most was the re-emergence of popery, which threatened to undermine the word of God. As a result an attack on belief in the power of the devil and witches was combined with an equally virulent attack on the power of the Catholic church. The main theme of *A Candle in the Dark*, written by the Puritan divine Thomas Ady in 1655, was that witchcraft was a papist plot designed to undermine legal authority by deceiving the courts into believing that witches had the power to harm.⁴² In addition earlier writers had pointed out that witches were far more likely to be Catholics. Richard Bernard wrote that witches were

Those that be superstitious and idolatrous, as all Papists be ... for Sorcerie is the practice of that whore the Romish Synagogue, Secondly it is found true, that healing witches doe use many of their Superstitious Ceromonies, Lip-Prayers, Ave-Maries, Creeds and Paternosters by set numbers ... They allow of Conjurers and Diabolicall Exorcismes, Witcherie tricks, inventions of Satan.⁴³

In 1631 Oliver Cromwell's old schoolmaster, Thomas Beard (d.1632), also observed 'That within these two hundred yeares hitherto, more Monkes and Priests have been found given over to these abominations and divellishnesses, than all the other degrees of people whatsoever'.⁴⁴ Even the relative sceptic, John Gaule (fl.1660), pronounced that

there has been, are, and are likely still to bee, more Witches under Popish; then in the Protestant Religion. For not only their Popes, Priests, Fryers, Nuns (many of them) have been notorious witches, but

⁴¹ G. Gifford, *A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1603), sgns. d3, c4; J. Cotta, *A Short Discoverie of the Unobserved Dangers of severall sorts of ignorant and unconsidered Practicers of Physicke in England* (London, 1612), p. 57-8; W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (London, 1698), pp. 19, 23-4.

⁴² T. Ady, *A candle in the dark: or, A Treatise concerning the Nature of Witches & Witchcraft* (London, 1655), pp. 9-12.

⁴³ R. Bernard, *Guide to Grand Jurymen*, p. 99.

⁴⁴ T. Beard, *Theatre of God's Judgements* (London, 1631), p. 122.

their praestigious miracles, and superstitious rites little better than kindes of Witch-crafts.⁴⁵

Thus although it may not have been the case that witches were prosecuted because they were papists, the imagery used by demonologists to describe such phenomena undoubtedly resulted in a developing belief amongst many that the devil, demons and witchcraft were associated with such views.

It would appear from these examples that Catholicism was strongly linked to the practice of witchcraft, and that its followers were often in danger of being accused of witchcraft. This seems to have been especially prevalent during the English Civil War, when the issues were adapted to accuse Royalist supporters of witchcraft and *vice versa*. This observation was not lost on the part of the Royalists, according to the opinion of a parliamentary journal in London on 24 July 1645 which stated that Royalists were inclined to remark the number of witches in the counties friendly to Parliament: 'I am sorry to informe you that one of the chieftest of them was a Parson's Wife (this will be good news with the Papists) ... Her name was Weight ... This woman (as I heare) was the first that was apprehended'.⁴⁶ However, although Royalist clergy may have been prosecuted, it seems that Puritan ministers (or their wives) could be allowed to escape. A later pamphleteer relates how the case of Mrs 'Wayt', a minister's wife, 'was a palpable mistake, for it is well knowne that she is a gentlewoman of a very godly and religeous life'.⁴⁷ In practice for many Puritans the distinction between Anglo-Catholicism and Roman Catholicism was minimal. 'An Arminian will take a papist by the hand, he a Jesuit, he the pope and King of Spain', said Mr Rous in the parliamentary session of 1629.⁴⁸

This case is in stark contrast with that of the staunchly Royalist octogenarian clergyman, John Lowes, vicar of Brandeston in Suffolk for 50 years, for whom no such mercy was granted. He had more than once been accused of witchcraft and

⁴⁵ J. Gaule, *Select Cases of conscience touching witchcrafts* (London, 1646), p. 16.

⁴⁶ *A Diary or an Exact Journal, July 24-31* (London, 1645), pp. 5-8.

⁴⁷ *A true Relation of the Arraignment of eighteen Witches at St. Edmundsbury* (London, 1645), p. 8.

⁴⁸ W. Notestein & F. H. Relf, *The Commons Debate for 1629* (Minneapolis, 1921), p. 109.

finally this was confirmed when he was swum in the castle moat at Framlingham and found to float.⁴⁹ Certainly it would be dangerous to conclude people were being prosecuted as witches simply because they supported the Royalist cause. However it is undoubtedly the case that holding such views in an area which generally supported Parliament (as was the case in Suffolk), would have made a person vulnerable to hostility and attack by the local populace on any grounds.

The English revolutionary period then was one in which a number of sectarian beliefs coexisted with superstitious beliefs. One pamphlet, published in 1642, perfectly illustrates the anxieties felt at the time by providing its readers with a simple definition of all the known sects. Amongst those listed 'For Bishops' were Papists, Arians, Arminians and Canonists. Those 'Against Bishops' were Atheists, Adamites, Familists, Anabaptists, Lutherans, Separatists, Brownists and Puritans.⁵⁰ During the 1640s the widespread disruption in the church had resulted in ecclesiastical courts being suspended with few left to deal with infringements against the church. According to one estimate one third of the parishes were empty, with either the local clergyman being expelled or seeking refuge. Some counties suffered more than others. In Worcester, for example, Richard Baxter observed that 'near one half the ministers, that were not good enough to do much service, nor bad enough to be cast out as utterly intolerable' were allowed to remain in their parishes in the mid 1640s. Perhaps of more significance was the number of benefices (rectories and vicarages) sequestrated between 1643 and 1660. These totalled 2,425 and were especially numerous in the south east of England: Cambridgeshire 62, Essex 152, Norfolk 132 and Suffolk 152.⁵¹ Moreover, wherever vacancies were created, there was a likelihood that the Parliamentary Committee for Plundered Ministers (set up to find livings for Puritans ejected in Royalist areas) would impose its own man.⁵² One consequence of

⁴⁹ F. Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ BL, TT E 180 (11), *The Divisions of the Church of England* (London, 1642), p. 1.

⁵¹ A. G. Mathews, *Walker Revised. Being a Revision of John Walker's 'Suffering of the Clergy During the Grand Rebellion 1642-60'* (Oxford, 1988), pref. pp. xiii-xiv, xvii.

⁵² J. Morrill, *The Impact of the English Civil War* (London, 1991), pp. 56-7.

this was that many offences normally dealt with by the church courts were now dealt with by the local assizes which were often presided over by JPs who allowed their political ideologies or superstitious beliefs to affect their judgements.

Not surprisingly, following the Restoration a similar campaign was orchestrated against orthodox Puritan ministers. In Warwickshire 36 parish ministers lost their livings in 1660 and 1662, unable to stomach the restoration of an unfettered episcopacy, a renewed liturgy and the requirement to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant. The irony is that such men hated separatists: 'they had spent 20 years preaching, writing and arguing in defence of a national church and now they were being identified with Quakers, Baptists and other sectaries'.⁵³ Rather more surprisingly the Catholic clergy also failed to gain much relief following the collapse of Cromwell's government, for a similar movement against them was experienced during the Restoration when many faced the loss of their ecclesiastical livings. This was especially the case when they were harassed by the provisions of the Five Mile Act and the Conventicle Act.⁵⁴

The 30 years between 1640 and 1670 produced many political changes and this inevitably had an effect upon which religious sects were viewed as orthodox and which were not. Linked inexorably to these changes were the debates taking place throughout the period amongst the intellectual élite concerning the power of the devil and the influence he exerted over mankind. Moreover, the demonological imagery employed in such arguments often deliberately denigrated or undermined political or religious opponents. Inevitably these arguments centred around the existence of witches and witchcraft, because it was believed that through witchcraft the devil could directly commune with humankind. England's unique brand of witchcraft belief - the demonic pact made with a familiar spirit - ~~COEXISTED WITH~~ this religious conflict. In

⁵³ A. Hughes, 'Godly Reformation and its Opponents in Warwickshire 1640-1662', *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers*, no. 35 (1993), pp. 23-4.

⁵⁴ Under the Conventicle Act of 1664 no more than four persons were allowed to assemble for non-Anglican worship; the Five Mile Act of 1665 restricted the movement of Dissenting clergy and imposed strict licensing on schoolteachers. E. Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 37-8.

England a witchcraft prosecution was not simply based on the alleged witch performing some malevolent act on his or her neighbour (although this was often cited as corroborating evidence), rather it was necessary in law to prove a demonic pact with the devil, and this was usually achieved by proving the alleged witch was worshipping a familiar. This was in effect simple heresy.

Moreover, as will become apparent in the next chapter, the debate concerning the existence of witchcraft, and the political or religious use the conclusions from such debates were put to, often remained very subtle. It is not really possible to use hard and fast terms like 'believer' and 'sceptic' when dealing with witchcraft. In reality the difference between the two camps was more apparent than real. Thus, if the period 1640-70 did not represent the peak of witchcraft persecution, or even the peak of superstitious belief, it at least appears to have been the period in which such beliefs were most exploited in polemical literature. Prior to 1640 such beliefs do not appear to have been taken seriously by the élite, with the result that witchcraft and related beliefs were marginalised, and restricted to squabbles between neighbours within isolated rural communities. However, the breakdown of censorship combined with the political, social, religious and economic upheavals which took place from the Civil War to the Restoration, all helped to ensure such beliefs once again became pertinent issues in the period 1640-70.

CHAPTER 2

The Devil, Demonology and its Relation to Witchcraft

One of the most important factors about polemics written between 1640-70 was the recognition that the language of demonology was an extremely useful means of expressing religious and political ideologies. Many writers incorporated the language of folklore, superstition and pagan belief into their works, because these subjects were close to popular understanding. One indication of this was the wealth of pamphlets and ballads published during the English Civil War period and beyond, many providing detailed accounts of witchcraft and the supernatural. These writings often converted to a popular form the more serious debates taking place amongst learned theologians and intellectuals by being written in ways that would make them more easily understood by uneducated people. Although the use of dialogues in treatises was nothing new and had always been a common way of conveying an argument to a reader, there is no doubt that the continued popularity of this particular style of writing was to ease the reader's assimilation of the argument.¹ Stuart Clark has argued that during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries it was a common feature of Protestant demonological polemics to be written in the form of sermons.² In fact the popularity of such themes was often used in sermons in order to remind people of the danger of transgressing accepted religious norms. During the 1650s the memory of the Witches of Warboys in Huntingdonshire in 1594 was said to have been still 'kept fresh by an Anniversary Sermon preach'd at *Huntingdon* by some of the Fellows of *Queens Colledge* in Cambridge'.³

¹ Both James VI of Scotland and William Perkins wrote treatises on witchcraft in forms of dialogues. James VI, *Daemonologie* (London, 1597); W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft* (London, 1608).

² S. Clark, 'Protestant Demonology: Sin, Superstition, and Society (c.1520-c.1630)', in eds. B. Ankarloo & G. Henningsen, *Early Modern European Witchcraft, Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford, 1993), p. 56.

³ H. More, *An Antidote Against Atheism, or, An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of the Minde of Man, whether there be not a God* (London, 1655), p. 175.

Indeed the popularity of such accounts and the subject of witchcraft continued well into the second half of the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century. In 1705 John Beaumont devoted time in his *Historical, physiological and theological Treatise of Spirits*, to analyse the pamphlet published in 1645 dealing with Mathew Hopkins' activity in Essex. Assessing the informations of the Essex witch Elizabeth Clarke and others, he concluded no one could deny the existence of spirits. He stressed that they were not afflicted persons, who pretended to see spectres, but rather they were 8 unexceptional persons who in their testimony concurred in one thing, namely that they had seen spirits. Despite the subjectivity of such opinions, they at least provide useful confirmation of the stories themselves and direct evidence that the accounts were widely read and believed, even well after the events had taken place. The account of the Essex witches, for example, is written in a style which suggests the author assumed most readers would have already been familiar with the story.⁴

Demonology in the seventeenth century included the intellectual study of all things demonic, including witchcraft, apparitions, ghosts, spirits and even angels. It was not the study of what today would be called the occult, instead it operated within the realms of known science.⁵ However, it was the debate about the powers of the devil and the influence he exerted on mankind that dominated much of these works. Linked to this debate were two other topics, witchcraft and possession: witchcraft, because it was widely believed witches were the devil's servants on Earth: possession, because it was believed the devil could enter a person's body and force him or her to do his will. Prior to 1640 the number of published popular demonological works specifically looking at witchcraft was relatively small. Between 1600 and 1640 there

⁴ J. Beaumont, *A historical, physiological and theological Treatise of Spirits, Apparitions, Witchcrafts, and other Magical Practices* (London, 1705), pp. 64-71.

⁵ I. Kirsh, 'Demonology and Science during the Scientific Revolution', *Journal of the History of Behavioural Sciences*, 16 (1980), pp. 359-60; S. Clark, 'The Scientific Status of Demonology', in B. Vickers, *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 362-3; S. Clark, 'The rational witchfinder: conscience, demonological naturalism and popular superstitions', in S. Pumphry, P. L. Rossi, M. Slawinski, eds., *Science, culture and popular belief in Renaissance Europe* (Manchester, 1991), p. 225.

had been 6 apologias published and only one sceptical work on witchcraft.⁶ Although there had been a number of sceptical works published before 1600,⁷ the relative dearth of publications after 1603 may have been due to a reticence amongst the intellectual élite to espouse a view contrary to that of the reigning monarch.⁸ In addition there had been 5 popular pamphlet accounts describing cases of witchcraft, all before 1620. By contrast during the period of study there were 5 apologias published justifying the prosecution of witches and 5 works condemning the persecution of witches.⁹ At first glance this would seem to indicate the academic demonological debate during this period was more balanced than the 40 years preceding 1640. However, during the 1640s and 1650s there was a concentration of more informal, non-academic demonological works and pamphlets, most of which encouraged belief in witchcraft. Indeed such works were the unique feature of this period. The rise of sectarianism, together with the removal of censorship, meant that while many tracts were published ostensibly disparaging non-conformity, in the process of so doing they often indirectly reinforced witchcraft belief. This was because many writers opposed to emerging sects, such as Anabaptists or Quakers, accused them of being in league with the devil and practising witchcraft. Others linked the attack on witchcraft belief before 1640

⁶ Apologias: King James VI, *Demonologie* (London, 1597); W. Perkins, *Discourse of the damned Art of Witchcraft* (London, 1608); A. Roberts, *Treatise of Witchcraft* (London, 1616); T. Cooper, *Mystery of Witchcraft* (London, 1617); M. Dalton, *Country Justice* (London, 1619); R. Bernard, *Guide to Grand Jurymen* (London, 1627). Attacking witchcraft persecution: J. Cotta, *Trial of Witchcraft* (London, 1616).

⁷ The more well known include: R. Scott, *Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1584); H. Holland, *Treatise Against Witchcraft* (London, 1590); G. Gifford, *Dialogue Concerning Witches and Witchcraft* (London, 1593).

⁸ This view probably only holds good for the early part of the seventeenth century, say to around 1615, for towards the end of James I's reign he had become more sceptical concerning the numbers of witches thought to exist, although he never denied their existence.

⁹ Apologias: M. Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches* (London, 1647); H. More, *Antidote Against Atheism* (London, 1653); M. Casaubon, *A True and faithful Relation* (London, 1659); T. Browne, *Religio Medico* (London, 1659); W. Drage, *Daimonomageia* (London, 1665); B. Campfield, *A Theological discourse* (London 1678). Attacking witchcraft persecution: J. Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience Concerning Witches* (London, 1646); N. Homes, *Demonology and Theology* (London, 1650); R. Filmer, *Advertisement to the Jurymen of England* (London, 1653); T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark* (London, 1656); J. Wagstaffe, *Question of Witchcraft Debated* (London, 1669).

with the growth of atheism and therefore may have felt it necessary to stress that the devil and witches existed in order to validate the existence of God.¹⁰

Although it is true many demonologists may have been categorised as being either in favour or against the prosecution of witches and would at first glance appear to have very little in common with each other, it would be a mistake to view their published works simply in terms of being for or against witchcraft belief. In fact demonological arguments from both sides of the divide were often remarkably similar. John Cotta, for example, has traditionally been characterised as a sceptic. However his views on witchcraft belie this assertion. His main aim was to destroy the mythology surrounding the belief in witchcraft, rather than to deny the existence of witches. To this end he attacked the perceived stereotypical image of a witch as an elderly woman: 'all who are convented upon these unlawfull actions, are not stricken in yeares; but some even in the flower of their youth'.¹¹ In a later work he argued that although witches existed, the standard of proof necessary for conviction should be much more stringent. In his *Infallible and True and Assured Witch* (1625), he asserted that witchcraft should only be detected through natural, lawful means:

there is or can bee no other ordinary tryall of Witchcrafts, then that which is common unto all other detections of trueth: and also that all detections subject unto the discoveries of man (as hath beene before cleared) and drawne and derived wither from Sense or Reason, or likely, probablity raised from both.

Moreover, he did not restrict his attack to those who defended witchcraft prosecution, for he attacked Reginald Scott's work as erroneously seeing 'impostures and witchcrafts ... as one and the selfe same thing'. The difference here (and it may be a subtle one) is that Cotta believed there were impostors as well as witches, whereas Scott had argued all witches were impostors. Cotta left no doubt that he believed in the existence of witches when he cited the evidence necessary to ensure their

¹⁰ For details of the pamphlets published between 1640-70 on demonological subjects - see the Bibliography.

¹¹ J. Cotta, *A Treatise of Witchcraft* (London, 1616), p. 4.

conviction: the speaking of languages previously not known by the victim, the testimony of a physician and the presence of the witch's mark.¹²

Such arguments were reiterated by writers during the period of study often as a result of or as a direct response to particular well-publicised witchcraft prosecutions. In the preface to his *Advertisement to the Jurymen of England*, Robert Filmer pointed out that it was written following the 'late execution of Witches, at the Summer Assizes in Kent'. He also attacked what he saw as the basic flaws in the work of the divine and witchcraft apologist William Perkins. He argued that of the 18 signs or proofs that Perkins mentioned, Perkins had himself admitted that the first 7 were insufficient as proof on their own. The next 8 were also insufficient. There remained only three signs which he thought remotely acceptable: the evidence of at least two witnesses, the confession of the accused witch, and that Satan would betray the witch. However, he challenged even these proofs, for he pointed out that it was often impossible to find witnesses because of the secrecy involved and that the confession was insufficient as proof because often the suspected witch was suffering from some form of delusion. In addition he condemned point-blank James VI's judgement 'as favouring witch-craft in allowing of the Triall of a Witch by swimming as a principal prooffe'. Filmer was particularly keen to stress the differences between witchcraft trials in England and the continent. Because of the jury system, he argued, it was more important for English people to be educated in supernatural matters so they could offer fair judgements at trials.

It concernes the People of this Nation to be more diligently instructed, in the Doctrine of Witch-craft, then those of forraigne Countries, because here they are tyed to a stricter or exacter Rule in giving their sentence, then others are; for al of them must agree in their Verdict, which in a case of extreme difficulty is very dangerous and it is a sad thing for Men to [be] reduced to that extremety, that they must hazzard their Consciences, or their lives.¹³

By contrast Thomas Ady, although also a sceptic, attacked witchcraft not on the grounds that it was necessary to be circumspect when analysing evidence against a

¹² J. Cotta, *The Infallible True and Assured Witch* (London, 1625), pp. 22, 70, 98-9.

¹³ R. Filmer, *Advertisement to the jurymen of England touching Witches* (London, 1653), pp. 11, pref.

suspected witch, but on the grounds of scriptural literalism. He challenged those 'witch-mongers', who supported the prosecution of witches, to show him where in the Bible it was written that a witch was a murderer, had imps or marks, should be swum, could fly, or could make a pact with the devil. He pointed out that the word witch was only mentioned twice in the Bible: Deuteronomy 18:10-11 and Exodus 22:18.¹⁴

Of course many of the sceptical writers during this period may have found the only way they could have espoused their views was through such arguments. To deny the existence of witchcraft altogether would have laid them open to the accusation of atheism. In later works, especially after 1660, there was a remarkable willingness amongst many sceptics to argue for the existence of spirits but not of witches. If we take John Wagstaffe (1633-1677) as an example of the type of scepticism prevalent during this period one sees that there is a clear differentiation between the power of the spirit world and that of witches. Although Wagstaffe may have doubted the authenticity of the numerous accounts detailing strange apparitions in the sky and other supernatural phenomena, he had no real objection to such stories. The real problem for him was to credit these accounts to acts of witchcraft, when quite clearly, if true, spirits were to blame. Thus he does not deny the existence of spirits. In this his stand was clearly empirical for he accepted the authority

of so many in the world, who affirm they have seen and heard the strange things which I just now mentioned; supposing that these spirits may often play mad pranks amongst us. But still I demand a reason, why I should believe that they do so, upon the account of a Contract made with any man or woman; for till this is proved, the question of witchcraft stands unconcerned.¹⁵

Although Wagstaffe had been an ardent sceptic, his defence of the existence of spirits made him an unwilling ally of the apologist Joseph Glanvill. For Glanvill the existence of witchcraft was too often challenged simply on the grounds that such a belief was absurd. His work was primarily directed at those who did not believe in witches because they did not believe in spirits. In essence he lumped all such people

¹⁴ T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark* (London, 1655), pp. 6, 9-10.

¹⁵ J. Wagstaffe, *The Question of Witchcraft debated* (London, 1669), pp. 59-60.

together as atheists. Thus when he defended himself against the argument that the existence of spirits was impossible and contradictory, and therefore so were witches, he says: 'If the notion of a Spirit be absurd as is pretended, that of a God and Soul distinct from matter, and immortal, are likewise absurdities'. Having convinced the reader in the existence of spirits Glanvill then argued that if this was accepted then there was 'good foundation for the belief in *Witches and Apparitions*, though the notion of a Spirit should prove to be as *absurd* and *unphilosophical*, as I judge the denial of it'.¹⁶ Once again there were parallels with Wagstaffe's arguments for he also argued that other creatures must exist and thus the existence of spirits was a certainty. The only difference between them was that Wagstaffe believed it wrong to argue that witches had to exist simply on the grounds that spirits did.

SURGEON AND CHAPLAIN

In 1677 the ~~Physician~~ ^{Surgeon and Chaplain} John Webster (1610-1682) wrote a treatise in which he launched a virulent attack on Joseph Glanvill and Meric Causabon. In particular he attacked the empirical stance taken by both these writers.

If I deny that a witch cannot fly in the air, nor be transformed or transubstantiated into a Cat, a Dog, or an Hare, or that the Witch maketh any visible Covenant with the Devil, or that he sucketh on their bodies, or that the Devil hath carnal copulation with them; I do not thereby deny either the Being of Witches, nor other properties that they may have for which they may be so called ... But this is the learned logic, and the clear ways of arguing that these men use.¹⁷

Once again the arguments advocated by a supposed sceptic were actually more subtle than would appear at first glance. Again we have a refusal to deny the existence of witches. Like Glanvill and Causabon he appeared to be more concerned about atheism. The difference between the two groups of thinkers was that Glanvill felt that not to believe in the power of witchcraft and ghosts was akin to atheism, while Webster did not believe that witches had any power unless it was sanctioned by God. Thus he was attributing all power to God although sometimes He used good or evil angels to achieve this. Glanvill felt that evil angels or the devil had their own

¹⁶ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), pp. 5-7.

¹⁷ J. Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), p. 10.

independent power. However, it seems that both believed that unbelief was the real danger.

It seems the main issue amongst writers in the 1640s was not simply whether witches existed or not - for few denied that they did - instead the debate seems to have centred around the numbers prosecuted and whether witches possessed any power to do evil. Such ideas are illustrated by the views expressed by many seventeenth-century demonologists that the real evil of the devil was not in seeking to cause harm to a man directly, but rather to cause harm to a third party by having an innocent person condemned and punished for an alleged act of *maleficium* simply on the grounds of his appearance.¹⁸ Richard Bernard, for example, believed that the devil often sought to blame an innocent person so that he or she would then be punished for witchcraft. The real power of the devil was in encouraging such beliefs in order to spread disharmony.¹⁹ It was not that Puritan divines believed witches did not exist, clearly they believed they did. What really seems to have been the sticking point for them was that they thought too many were being condemned.²⁰ What is more they blamed this on the devil. By the end of the period of study the argument had developed to the point where the blame for such deceptions lay not with witches but with mischievous spirits. In 1669 John Wagstaffe, writing about the numerous accounts of possession and bewitchment, acknowledged as true some of the stories that said people had been tempted by devils. However he saw no reason to believe they were witches. Rather he concluded malicious spirits were more likely to be responsible, and that 'then seeing some poor wretch was likely to be accused of it, procured their condemnation by promoting the accusation'.²¹

¹⁸ See: G. Gaule, *Select cases of conscience*, p. 4 and A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, pp. 4-5, in which the prosecution of witches simply because of their ugly appearance is condemned by two Protestant divines.

¹⁹ R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen* (London, 1627), pp. 202-3.

²⁰ R. Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584), ed. M. Summers (New York, 1972), p. 9. Scott argues that witchcraft was a sin of false belief, rather than the ability to cause any evil.

²¹ J. Wagstaffe, *The Question of Witchcraft Debated; Or, a discourse against their Opinion that affirm Witches* (London, 1669), pp. 62-3.

If it was the innocent who were being punished as witches, there was the problem of explaining why this was allowed to happen. As we have seen it was widely believed the devil had no power without leave from God. The implication of this was that God was sanctioning the condemnation of innocent people as witches. One way of settling this problem had been to portray the devil as a learned sage-like philosopher. His power was not in the physical acts he could or could not perform, but in his knowledge.²² By using this knowledge, he could then deceive others into thinking he had power.²³ In 1587 George Gifford (d.1620) applied this view of the devil to the current debate of where witches gained their power. He stressed that neither the witch nor the devil had any real power, but the devil could deceive others into thinking he had:

Hee seeth the rootes and causes of diseases, and when they wil come foorth. He sterreth his dame, or rather his poore vassal and setleth her in quarell with that man. She sendeth him, the man falleth lame, or into some languishing sickness, his hogges or his kyne do die. Ther was natural cause of lameness of sickness and death which the Lord sent, and Satan would have it layd upon him. The witch seeth such effects follow, and gathereth for certaynty that she did it. The man calleth to mynd how hee displeased her, and how she did threaten him, and now is sure shee did it.²⁴

Such arguments, although taken from before the period of study, are essential to our understanding of what came later. During the English Civil War these themes were taken up not only by demonologists but also by witch hunters. In his *Discovery of Witches* (1645), Mathew Hopkins explained that the devil had lived for more than 6,000 years, and thus had become experienced in the art of physic and become a learned scholar. As a result he could tell when a person was likely to die or if he or she was suffering from some natural disease. The devil was then able to deceive those close to the dying person that a third party had caused the death through witchcraft,

²² For examples of the great knowledge of the devil see: J. Gifford, *A Discourse of the Subtill Practices of Devilles by witches and sorcerers* (London, 1587), sg. G3; A. Roberts, *Treatise of Witchcraft*, p. 24; R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen* (London, 1627), p. 1.

²³ Although Stuart Clark has argued that such a portrayal of the devil as a learned philosopher was an often repeated theme during the seventeenth century, he makes no attempt to explain why this was so or to link this with witchcraft belief. S. Clark, 'The Scientific Status of Demonology', in *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. B. Vickers (Cambridge, 1984), p. 365.

²⁴ G. Gifford, *Discourse*, sg. G3.

and by these methods was able to gain converts.²⁵ Such arguments were fundamental to Hopkins' work. In addition, the remarkable similarity between Hopkins' arguments and those of previous writers is also an indication that he was well read in such matters. This is not what some historians would have us believe. It has been claimed that Hopkins 'had made little or no preparation of the work that now came to his hand', and that he was only familiar with James's *Daemonologie*.²⁶ However, the similarity in the works of Hopkins, and his colleague John Stearne, with other writers is too great to ignore. Firstly, Hopkins's account of the devil deceiving his victims into thinking that they had caused the death of a person who had died naturally, is almost identical to Gifford's argument 60 years earlier, and also to that of Roberts in 1616 and Bernard in 1627. Secondly, we know that Stearne was well read because he tells us 'I therefore (as my leasure hath permitted me) have given my selfe to the reading of some approved relations touching the arraignment and condemnation of witches; As also the treatises of learned men concerning the devillish art of witchcraft'.²⁷ Therefore, it is likely that Hopkins's work was based on previous demonological tracts which would indicate that he was better read than he has been given credit for.

Like many earlier demonologists, Hopkins was in effect saying that witchcraft did not exist at all, in the sense that witches did not have any real power to harm others. Rather he reiterated the arguments of earlier demonologists by saying witchcraft was merely a delusion. Witchcraft could not cause death or misfortune, and therefore all those who had been solely charged with this offence should not have been. For Hopkins the only offence was that of making a compact with the devil and worshipping a familiar spirit. He later pointed out that he wished that

Magistrates and jurats would a little examine witnesses when they heare witches confess such and such a murder, whether the party had not a long time before, or at the time when the witch grew suspected,

²⁵ M. Hopkins, *Discovery of Witches* (London, 1645), p. 9.

²⁶ W. Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England* (New York, 1968), p. 165.

²⁷ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation and discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1648), sg. A2.

some disease or other predominant, which might cause that issue or effect of death.²⁸

His view, based on biblical grounds, was that the main offence of witchcraft was worshipping a false God, rather than killing or harming by witchcraft, something he plainly thought impossible.

It seems witchcraft was viewed, by Protestant demonologists at least, as an offence in which its adherents worshipped the devil instead of God. Moreover, it was acknowledged that the devil had no power except through his knowledge and in his power to deceive others. The portrayal of the devil in this way was important because there was a basic problem for seventeenth-century demonologists to explain. It went without saying that the devil existed, but the difficulty lay in crediting him with too much power and influence over Mankind, for this derogated from the power of God as the one supreme being and was therefore thought by many to be atheistic. Instead, many felt it convenient to link witchcraft with a lack of godliness.²⁹ In other words witches were heretics or unbelievers, because they believed in the potency of the devil to help them, rather than God. Thus it was argued that the devil could not deceive a person into thinking he was a witch without God allowing it to happen, and if God was allowing the devil to deceive someone it was because he or she was a sinner. Therefore witches were seen to be deserving of their fate because they were being punished by God. In this way the apparent contradiction of God allowing evil in the world was reconciled.

These arguments were not intended to imply the devil did not exist, or indeed that he had no power. Rather it was argued that the devil's power was different to God's. It was widely believed by most people that the devil was ever present to seduce Mankind to evil and that a person should always be on his or her guard against his temptations. Such fears made it possible to denigrate certain social types as being more likely to be open to the machinations of the devil. In addition the temperament

²⁸ M. Hopkins, *Discovery*, p. 9.

²⁹ See: G. Gifford, *A Dialogue concerning Witches and Witchcrafts. In which is layed open how craftily the Divell deceaveth not onely the Witches, but many others, and so leadeth them awrie into manie errors* (London, 1603), sg. M2.

of the person was also thought to be very important. According to the Presbyterian divine, Richard Baxter (1615-1691), the devil 'could tempt a phlegmatic man to sloth; a sanguine man to lust; a melancholic man to despair and self-destruction against God'.³⁰ Likewise the antiquarian Edward Pocton believed that the devil snared people into following him according to their disposition. If the devil found a pious man, then he could appear as a saint and exhort him to use 'superstitious prayers and charms'.³¹ Again this illustrates how the devil and witchcraft were increasingly seen as similes for superstition and popery. This example also demonstrates how godliness offered no protection to the temptations of the devil; if anything the pious were more likely to fall under his sway. According to Richard Baxter, it was rarely the sinful who succumbed to the affliction of melancholia, rather it was nearly always a characteristic of the godly. Those that Satan could not deceive into 'presumptuous unbelief' and so torment in the afterlife, 'he would torment here'. Baxter knew of many people as 'godly as any that I have known', who had destroyed themselves.³²

One of the major changes which took place in demonological arguments from 1640, as compared with the preceding 30 years, lay in the use they were put to. During the English Civil War there was ample opportunity for such arguments to be employed in order to put across a particular political or religious ideology. Thus the most useful power of the devil was not any real physical power that he may or may not have possessed, but the power of his reputation and the use this could be put to by unscrupulous propagandists, or even in religious polemics. The commonest manifestation of this was in linking possession by the devil with whatever group a particular propagandist wished to attack. During the English Civil War both sides utilised such imagery for their own ends. The pamphlet *A Wonderful and strange miracle or Gods just vengeance against the Cavaliers* (1642), described how a Royalist soldier who had drunk a toast to the devil in an inn later went into fits and soon

³⁰ R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits* (London, 1691), pp. 173-4.

³¹ BL., Sloane MS 1954, f. 48, Edward Pocton, 'The Winnowing of White Witchcraft'.

³² R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits*, p. 172.

afterwards died. This was described by the author of the pamphlet as 'Gods Vengeance' for blasphemy.³³ Other pamphlets attacked Parliamentary supporters. One satirical pamphlet, published in 1642, linked the Parliamentarians with the devil. In *The Devil Turn'd Roundhead*, Pluto was described as trying to emulate one of the religious sects. Firstly he considered the Puritans, but they had all gone over the sea to New England. Then he considered the Brownists, but he rejected them on the grounds that they were occupied 'among the holy Sisters, that he likewise reputed them secure in his own custody'. Finally, he decided to become a Roundhead and introduced them to his own satanic opinions. He pruned his hair, denied the Book of Common Prayer and conformed to hate all good manners, orders, rules and government in the church and commonwealth, as they were all superstition and popery. 'Thus the Divill in every respect did assimilate himselfe to the absolute comparison of a Round-head, and became so conformable in every Degree unto them, that for his little Faith he seemed Really so to be'.³⁴ Another satirical attack on Parliament's supporters, this time in 1648, was published in the form of a dialogue between the devil and Parliament. According to this work the devil had created the Parliament and had now decided to abandon it to its fate:

By me you first took up Armes against your gracious King, by me deluded the people with a vain hope of Reformation ... by me entered into a Covenant with Death, & hell; by me you have practised all manner of cruelties and oppression, and by me it was that you were prevalent against your sovereigne.

The devil concluded that he had deceived the Parliament into pursuing its course of action. Now he was deserting it, and its supporters were all doomed to join him in hell.³⁵ Thus the devil is used here as a form of scapegoat for evil. In other words it

³³ BL, TT E 434 (15), *A wonderful and strange miracle or Gods just vengeance against the Cavaliers declaring how Mr Andrew Stonby, a Cavalier under the command of the Lord Mohane at Listelleth in Cornwall, at the signe of the Dolphin, dranke a toast to the Devill* (London, 1642). For further examples on the evils of health drinking see C. Hindley, ed., *The Old Book Collectors Miscellany* (London, 1872), 3 vols, vol. ii., p. 76.

³⁴ BL, TT E 136 (29), *The Devil Turn'd Roundhead: Or, Pluto became a Brownist. Being a just comparison, how the Devil is become a Roundhead. In what manner, and how zealously (like them) he is affected with the moving of the spirit* (London, 1642).

³⁵ BL, TT E 443 (18), *The Devill and the Parliament: or, The Parliament and the Devill* (London, 1648).

was not that Parliament was inherently evil, rather it had been wrongly advised and influenced by the devil. This sort of imagery was in a way an inversion of the language used in 1642 by Parliament's supporters, many of whom had argued that the King was not wrong, but had merely been led astray by his papist advisors. Such language was a useful means of criticising a political opponent without expressing disloyalty to his office.

The devil could also be used to discredit nonconformity or be blamed for atheism and popery. An account which illustrates a use of this type of imagery relates how a group of men were attacked by a mad dog, but because they were described as 'papists', the dog is described as the 'devil'. The implication was that even the devil believed that papists were wrong.³⁶ Another example demonstrating how the devil could be used to attack nonconformity was published in 1647. Joyce Dovey of Bewdley, Worcestershire, was possessed by the devil and went into fits, speaking in a voice far deeper than normal. She was described as formerly having very little interest in religion, but after attending a sermon about 4 years previously she had seemed very dejected, and her fits had begun. Apparently a chaplain from a nearby regiment attended her and it was observed that when the conversation was of worldly, normal matters she was able to speak normally. However, when the conversation was changed to spiritual or religious matters it was detected that her voice changed to a 'bigger and grosser tone then her ordinary speech, and when he [the devil] speaketh, she looketh fiercely with something arrising big in her throat, and commonly with swearing'.³⁷ In a pamphlet, penned in 1658, Lydia Rogers of Wapping was possessed by the devil after making a contract with him. Again, like the previous cases, the greater susceptibility to the devil's temptations was put down to her nonconformity, this time because she was an Anabaptist. The pamphlet also contained a general

³⁶ BL, TT E 180 (19), *A Relation of a strange apparition in an ale-house next doore to the White House, against Somerset-House in the Strand; Where a company of Papists were at their exercises; as is conceived the devill in an ugly black shape disturbing them, and tearing the rugge, and scattering it in pieces up and down the roome* (London, 1651).

³⁷ BL, TT E 367 (4), *A strange and true relation of a young woman possest with the devill* (London, 1647).

exhortation against the evils of Anabaptists, Quakers and Ranters, accusing them of being the devil's servants on Earth.³⁸ According to Richard Baxter, among those who had been especially deluded by the devil by pretended angelic revelation were the Ranters and the Quakers. Of the Quakers he said that their 'societies began like Witches, with Quaking, and Vomiting, and Infecting others, with breathing on them, and tying Ribbons on their Hands. And their Actions as well as their Doctrines shewed their Master'.³⁹

The devil was not only used to reinforce the acceptable religious beliefs of the time and condemn nonconformists, but was also employed to deplore moral failing. However, in these cases the devil was seen as tempting rather than possessing his or her victim. This was often the case in explaining away misfortune or injury, but was especially so when moralising about the causes of strange or unnatural deaths. Laying the blame for a person's death on the devil seems to have been especially popular if the victim's character could be challenged on the grounds of heresy, atheism or immorality. This appears to have been the case, according to a ballad penned in the early 1650s, of a certain unfortunate woman from London. The ballad tells of a wife who had been left in England while her husband went overseas. He left her sufficient funds, but she frittered it all away on wild living. Finally she was in such despair that the devil appeared to her in the likeness of a tall black man. She made a compact with him in her own blood and was promised that she would have all the riches she wanted, if the devil could have her soul after her child was born. The woman lived it up and after she was delivered of a baby boy the devil came to the house and asked all the midwives to leave the birthing chamber. After they had done so there was heard from within terrible screams.

Her head was from her body torn,
her limbs about the room did ly,
The blood ran all about the place,
as many folks can testify.

³⁸ BL, TT E 1833 (2), *The Snare of the Devil discovered: Or, a true and perfect Relation of the sad and deplorable condition of Lydia the wife of John Rogers* (London, 1658).

³⁹ R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits*, pp. 175-6.

It seems the Devill his bargain had,
wherefore I with that one and all,
To have a care of what they do,
and to take warning of her fall.

True or not, the ballad had a clear message: be moral and live modestly. The manner of her death is described in a deliberately provocative way, conjuring up as it does images of the bestial and supernatural. The head was not cut from the body, but 'torn', an act no mere mortal could have done.⁴⁰ The portrayal of a person believed to have been killed by the devil usually involved a description of their corpse which invited no other cause of death. The death had to be inexplicable by natural means. When a maid was struck dead after swearing at a woman, her body was later found to be 'black as pitch all over'. The final verse of this particular ballad states the moral of the tale:

So to conclude remember still,
Swearing and Cursing ends in woe,
If you let the Devil have his will,
hee'l prove the worst & greatest foe.⁴¹

A common feature of these and other cases was that the victims were often depicted as suffering from melancholia or depression. In some cases victims were described as having previously attempted suicide. Alternatively they had committed acts of self-mutilation, which had then been blamed on the devil. One woman, Lydia Rogers, had been reported as having attempted suicide a number of times before meeting with the devil and making a contract with him, and it is perfectly possible that the marks described on her arms were the legacy of previous attempts to cut her wrists. Likewise with the case of Joyce Dovey, who had also attempted to kill herself and cut her wrists several times, but on each occasion had been unable to harm herself.⁴² One particularly gruesome suicide, described in a pamphlet published in 1662, in which George Gibbs cut open his belly and pulled out his bowels, is cited by

⁴⁰ *Strange and wonderful news of a woman which lived neere unto the Famous City of London, who had her head torn off from her body by the Divell*, in J. W. Ebsworth, 'A collection of thirty three 17th century ballads, c.1651-5', *Book of Fortunes* (London, 1884). This story also appears in *Mercurius Fumigosus*, February, 14-21 (1655), p. 298.

⁴¹ C. Hindley, ed., *The Old Book Collections Miscellany*, vol. ii, pp. 146-150.

⁴² See above, p. 42.

the author as evidence that the devil was responsible.⁴³ In addition, placing the blame on a third party in this way may well have been an attempt to prevent the accusation of self-murder: the responsibility for the actions of the deceased could be blamed on the devil's temptation. The cathartic effect of such an explanation of suicide may have been an essential part of the mourning process, especially in an age where most of the population believed that the devil could possess mankind or tempt him to madness and sin.

The devil could also be blamed for tempting people to commit violent crime. Such crimes, as one might expect, included murder and infanticide, but other crimes, such as adultery, were also covered by such beliefs. Just as today we speak of a charge of murder being reduced to manslaughter 'on grounds of diminished responsibility' (temporary loss of reason), similar cases in the seventeenth century were not the result of temporary insanity, but of the victim succumbing to the devil. The main difference between then and now, of course, was that this did nothing to reduce the sentence, but it at least helped to explain how people could be corrupted into committing particularly heinous crimes. When Joan Tilney was brought before the Ely Assizes in October 1646 for infanticide, she admitted to cutting the throat of her child. But this was because 'it would not be quiett' and that 'the divell stirred upp & downe w[i]thin her'.⁴⁴ When Anne Hampton was indicted for the murder of her husband by poisoning him at London, in 1641, the act was thought to be so evil, it could not have been conceived by a human mind. Instead it was reported the devil had tempted her into killing her husband.⁴⁵

Similarly in cases of adultery the human failing was invariably blamed on temptation by the devil. The case of Henry Bayspoole of 'Firland' in Norfolk, who

⁴³ *The Devils cruelty to Mankind, Being a true relation of the Life and Death of George Gibbs* (London, 1662).

⁴⁴ CUL, MS E/12, Ely Assize Files (un-numbered folio), 'examination of Joane the wife of Simon Tilney 26 Oct. 1646'.

⁴⁵ *Murther, Murther, or, a bloody relation how Anne Hamton dwelling in Westminster nigh London, by poyson murdered her deare husband, Sept. 1641*, repr. in ed. C. Hindley, *The Old Book Collectors Miscellany* (London, 1872), vol. ii.

appeared accused of adultery at the Norwich Sessions for 1654, was typical of many. According to the wording of the presentment he was accused of 'not having God before his eyes but being seduced by the devill knowinge Elizabeth Morley'.⁴⁶ Such examples are particularly interesting because in this case it was a man accused of being corrupted - in contrast to other crimes which seem to link temptation by the devil with women. One explanation for such behaviour was that the guilt could be transferred to a woman, for in adultery cases the devil often proved useful in excusing a man's infidelity. He was never tempted by his own lust, for example, but blamed the woman by saying he had been seduced by her. By resorting to such an excuse he could claim that he had been a victim of the devil's persuasion. Moreover, the wording of the indictment implies the woman may have been at fault, because she herself may have been a victim of diabolical temptation. The seduction took place because the devil had persuaded the woman to seduce the man. God becomes a simile for 'wife', in the sense that 'not havinge God before his eyes', meant that one had not remained true to one's wife. In this way adultery was treated as heresy as well as a secular crime, just as in witchcraft cases it was not only heretical to have sexual intercourse with the devil but also adulterous.

The greater susceptibility of women to the machinations of the devil, illustrated in these cases, was typical of the stereotypical portrayal of women as far more likely than men to be corrupted by the devil. Much of the evidence cited by demonologists to reinforce these ideas had its foundation in the Bible. For James VI 'that sexe is frailer then mans, so is it easier to be intrapped in these grosse snares of the Devill, as was over well proved to be true, by the Serpents deceiving of Eva'.⁴⁷ Biblical evidence was also used by William Perkins, although in this case he argued literally, that when Moses set out the judicial law against witches he used a word in the feminine gender - *mecashephap* - 'which in English properly signifieth, a woman

⁴⁶ NRO, MS 11/64, no. 32, sessions for Norwich (Oct., 1654).

⁴⁷ James VI, *Daemonologie*, pp. 43-4.

witch'.⁴⁸ Other writers listed lengthy reasons why women were more prone to the devil's machinations. These ranged from their greater credulity and curiosity to their greater facility to fall. It was also believed that they were filled with a greater capacity for revenge than men. Moreover, because they were of the weaker sex and were thus less capable of seeking revenge through more physical means, it was believed they often had to rely on the power of spells and charms from the devil.⁴⁹ It is perhaps understandable for women accused of a crime to resort to such a defence, or, perhaps more commonly, for the courts to offer temptation by the devil as an explanation on their behalf. The explanation that the devil had tempted the woman pandered to the prejudices of the time.

The devil's portrayal as seducer of the morality of Man, is closely linked to his portrayal as an adulterer himself. When he tempted people to follow him, the contract was often sealed with an act of sexual intercourse, or the kissing or sucking some part of the body.⁵⁰ The act could be interpreted as adulterous because it signified love of the devil instead of love of God. In addition the act implied prostitution, as the witch was usually given a gift after the contract had been sealed. When Joan Williford was tried before the Mayor of Faversham in Kent, she confessed that the devil had appeared to her in the shape of a small black dog and after she had made a contract with him she had not lacked in money. Sometimes she was brought *1s.*, other times *8d.*⁵¹ Likewise, when a Wiltshire maid confessed she had made a contract with the devil she said that she had been given a piece of silver by him.⁵² When Lydia Rogers

⁴⁸ W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft; so Farre Forth as it is revealed in the Scriptures, and manifest by true experience* (Cambridge, 1608), p. 168. This argument was repeated by R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen*, pp. 91-3; J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁹ N. Remy, *Demonolatriy* (1595), trans. E. A. Ashwin, ed. M. Summers (London, 1930), p. 56; A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, pp. 42-3; R. Bovet, *Pandaemonium or the Devil's Cloyster* (London, 1684), p. 31.

⁵⁰ M. Hopkins, *Discovery*, p.15; *Wonderful Newes from the North* (London, 1650), p. 24; T. B. Howell, *State Trials* (London, 1816), vol. viii, p. 1018.

⁵¹ BL, TT E 303 (33), *The Examination, confessions, Triall, and Execution, of Joan Williford, Joan Carriden, and Jane Hott: who were executed at Feversham in Kent, for being Witches* (London, 1645), p. 1.

⁵² J. Bower, *Doctor Lamb revived* (London, 1653), p. 16.

had made a contract with the devil it was because she had been 'wanting money'.⁵³ In fact it was generally believed that the witch had no power to do evil until she had made such a pact with the devil. Mathew Hopkins pointed out, in 1648, that 'before any of them can have power to doe anything, against, or for any party, or have any desired ends effected, the league expresse or implicit is made'.⁵⁴ In 1665 the author of *Daimonomagia* argued that it was ridiculous to believe that the ceremonies performed by witches could bewitch their victims. Rather their real power to do harm came from the contract made with the devil.⁵⁵

Such acts could also contain elements of bestiality, in the sense that the devil often took the image of an animal in order to perform the act of sexual intercourse. Whenever his description is available, the devil is more often than not portrayed as an animal of some kind, often differing in quite dramatic ways from the commonly held conceptions of such animals. Such creatures ranged from fifteen foot tall apes to headless bears.⁵⁶ Alternatively, if the devil was described in human terms, it was always as exceptionally tall, short, or, the most common, as a black man. When Elizabeth Clarke was questioned by Mathew Hopkins in 1645, she described the devil as a 'tall, proper, black haired gentleman'.⁵⁷ One short pamphlet account of an apparition of the devil seen in London in 1647 provides useful evidence of how the devil was imagined. He was 'a great tall man (or rather Devill) at least six yards in height, with long blacke shagged hair, his eyes as bigge as two ordinary pewter dishes flaming like fire'.⁵⁸ Such accounts always stressed the terrifying aspect and huge size of the vision in order to leave the reader in no doubt it was supernatural in origin. The devil was usually portrayed as dark, there was often an association with fire, and he

⁵³ BL, TT E 1833 (2), *The Snare of the Devil discovered* (London, 1658), pp. 3-5.

⁵⁴ M. Hopkins, *Discovery*, p. 10.

⁵⁵ W. Drage, *Daimonomageia* (London, 1665), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁶ H. Lovell, *Horrid and Strange Newes from Ireland* (London, 1643); BL, TT E 190 (11), *Most fearful and strange newes from the bisophricke of Durham* (London, 1641).

⁵⁷ M. Hopkins, *A Discovery of Witchcraft*, p. 15.

⁵⁸ BL, TT E 385 (7), *Fearful Apparitions of the Strangest visions that ever hath been heard of* (London, 1647), p. 2.

was nearly always large and powerful. Images of angels or of God, on the other hand, stressed purity, light and smooth features.⁵⁹ Many of these images would lie in the sub-conscious, either from church portrayals of such figures or from biblical accounts and popular conceptions of how demons and angels looked. Moreover, such accounts would have been self-perpetuating. The more people read of them, the more the image of the devil was generally accepted, and the more likely they were to confirm such descriptions if they experienced such visions.

In addition to the way in which the devil was portrayed, there was great debate amongst demonologists during the mid-seventeenth century as to the material form of the devil, and whether it was possible for him to possess a body or to take whatever shape he pleased. However, during the Civil War period and beyond, there had been a shift of emphasis in the way demonologists explained possession. Whereas during the earlier part of the seventeenth century writers were clearer concerning what signs to look out for in order to diagnose possession, by 1645 many of these symptoms were being used as evidence of bewitchment.⁶⁰ The problem was exacerbated by the debate amongst demonologists concerning the difference between possession by the devil, which gave the devil too much power, and natural maladies, which were seen as God-given. Indeed the point has been made by Keith Thomas that in 'England the epithets "possessed" and "bewitched" came very near to being synonymous'.⁶¹ In practice there was more confusion amongst contemporaries over this issue than has been recognised. While the general symptoms listed by specialist writers on the subject were probably accepted by many as evidence of possession by the devil, based as they were on past accounts, there still remained the problem of ascertaining the actual source of the possession. If it could be agreed a person was possessed then how could

⁵⁹ For the contrast between the two images of such apparitions, see: J. Pordage, *Innocence appearing through the dark mists of Pretended Guilt* (London, 1654), pp. 73-6.

⁶⁰ James VI had listed three symptoms of possession: unnatural strength, discharging of unnatural objects and the ability to speak previously unknown languages. James VI, *Daemonologie*, pp. 70-1. In 1645 these same symptoms were used to show a person had been bewitched. *The Lawes against Witches and Conjurations* (London, 1645), p. 570.

⁶¹ K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, 1971), p. 570.

one tell if this had been caused by witchcraft or was instead diabolical possession, caused directly by the devil? Thus, one of the major difficulties about the debate concerning possession was whether it was directly attributable to the devil, or a witch. The implications of this were serious, for in the former case no witch was blameworthy, in the latter case he or she was.

By the time of the Interregnum writers were able to make distinctions between different types of possession. The Puritan divine Dr Nathaniel Holmes argued that the devil had three ways in which he could corrupt men: possession, obsession and suggestion. Possession was where the devil was permitted to enter into a person and corrupt him or her. Obsession was when the devil had power over a person's body only (as opposed to their body and soul). Suggestion was when the devil troubled the senses, causing people to see apparitions, representations of spiritual images of evil things.⁶² In all three cases the devil is blamed, though it is only the first defined which was strictly speaking a case of true possession. The others were mere cases of diabolic temptation: one in which the victim became an automata and was forced to act against his or her will; the other in which the victim was tempted by the devil to do evil.

Given that the symptoms of possession by the devil, and possession by the devil which had in turn been caused by bewitchment seem to have been virtually indistinguishable, one may be forgiven for wondering how contemporaries could tell the difference. In practice the usual method by which victims of possession were diagnosed as being bewitched was twofold: firstly, they would cry out during their fits that a particular person was responsible for bewitching them, and if that person was in their presence their fits would often get worse; secondly, a third party, sometimes a physician or clergyman, but more often a cunning man or white witch, would diagnose they had been bewitched.

⁶² N. Holmes, *Plain Dealing, or the cause and cure of the Present Evils of the Times* (London, 1652), pp. 31, 78-9.

The way in which the possessed managed to convey to onlookers who or what was responsible for their predicament were many and varied. In addition the credence witnesses gave to accusations made by possession victims, seems to have known no bounds. It was often the case that the victim would receive some sort of supernatural insight whilst experiencing the fit, which usually resulted in them naming the person who had bewitched him or her. When Francis Caule went into fits he alleged that the suspected witch, Ann Disbarrow, was in the room with him. This was despite the statements from all the other witnesses to the contrary. However, when Ann Disbarrow was subsequently examined by the justices she admitted to being in the room with him during his fits.⁶³ It was later conveniently explained that the reason she had not been seen by the other witnesses was because she had been invisible. Similarly, when Mary Hill of Beckington near Frome in Somerset was possessed and became ill, vomiting up nails, she alleged that she had been bewitched by Elizabeth Carrier who was promptly taken into custody. In the same manner Margery Coombes and Ann More were apprehended. All three were put on trial for their lives simply on the word of Mary Hill. Although they were subsequently acquitted by Lord Chief Justice Holt, Elizabeth Carrier died in prison.⁶⁴ In other cases a person could be possessed by more than one spirit which would then have conversations with each other and in the process reveal the name of the person who had bewitched him. The difference between such incidents, and those where the victim was possessed by one spirit, was that instead of a third party interceding in the debate, the entire conversation took place from one person's lips.⁶⁵

The great power placed on the individual to cause harm to another by alleging that he had been bewitched was undoubtedly abused in order to get back at unpopular

⁶³ CUL, MSS E/12 (unnumbered folio), 'examination of Ann Disbarrow'.

⁶⁴ R. Baxter, *The certainty of the world of spirits*, p. 74.

⁶⁵ BL, Add. MS 36674, fo. 189, anon. For further examples of the possessed speaking with two voices, see: S. Clarke, *The Lives of Two and Twenty English Divines Eminent In Their Generations for Learning, Piety, and Painfulness in the Worke of the Ministry, and for their Sufferings in the Cause of Christ* (London, 1660), pp. 91-4, 216-7.

figures within the community. To this extent it must have been the case that a great number of possession cases were faked. The problem is that it is nearly impossible to prove this. Common sense tells us that accounts of bewitched possession victims vomiting up pins, nails or coals were quite impossible, but that merely relies on supposition. What one can certainly argue is that the problem of fakery was commented on at the time by contemporary writers. The surgeon and chaplain John Webster, writing in 1677, expressed grave reservations as to the more outlandish claims made by possession victims. He pointed out that in his 40 years of practising physic, 'he could never find any such thing in truth and reality, but have known many that have counterfeited these strange vomitings, and the like, which we have plainly laid open and detected'.⁶⁶ Although he did not completely deny such events could take place, he argued most of them were cheats and delusions perpetrated by the victim, or reported mistakenly by vain, credulous or ignorant observers. Such sceptical attacks were obviously taken note of by those who actually prosecuted witches, for by 1660 many circuit judges were openly expressing grave doubts about the reliability such evidence in court.⁶⁷

Debates over the question of possession became particularly prevalent during the latter part of the seventeenth century when a consensus gradually emerged which saw the devil as a spirit, rather than the tall black man, demon, or imp more common earlier in the century.⁶⁸ John Wagstaffe argued that God did not send the devil to do evil as punishment for the sins of mankind. God was able to punish mankind for sinning without the devil's help. This did not mean he did not believe that devils

⁶⁶ J. Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), p. 252.

⁶⁷ For other examples of fraud perpetrated by alleged possession victims see: R. Baxter, *The certainty of the world of spirits* (London, 1691), pp. 74-8; A. Jessop, ed., *Lives of the Norths* (London, 1890), 3 vols., vol. i, p. 169; E. Callamy, *A brief representation and discovery of the notorious falsehood and disimulation contained in a book styled, The Gospel Way confirmed by Miracles, published by Nicholas Ware, and Mathew Hall, for the use of the Church of Whatfield in Suffolk* (London, 1649).

⁶⁸ CUL, MS Dd, III 84, f. 11, anon., (Philaethes, Eutrapelas), 'Cacodemon or the Hobgoblin, being a serious inquiry into the Doctrine of Devils, asserted and maintained by the modern witchmongers, etc. In a dialogue between two neighbours under the borrowed names of Verax and Fallax' (1692); J. Wagstaffe, *The Question of Witchcraft debated*, pp. 49-50; BL, TT, E 707 (2), *Doctor Lamb's Darling* (London, 1653), p. 47.

existed, rather he thought they were merely aerial creatures, 'and though they may have more skill, agility and strength, then men, yet that they act as men do, by applying of natural agents and patients to one another in this sublinary world'.⁶⁹

In addition many problems arose in explaining the mechanics of possession. For a corporeal body to be possessed the spirit or devil had to be non-corporeal. But this meant that the devil was a thing of air and unable to cause any harm. If, on the other hand, the devil was a physical creature then he would not be able to possess another corporeal creature. In addition this would have conflicted with biblical evidence, which stated all physical creatures had been created by God and that He had created no evil only good creatures.⁷⁰ Thomas Bromhall, writing in 1658, argued that angels or devils, even though incorporeal, were nevertheless able to take over corporeal bodies. They did not do this in order to achieve a unification, rather it was done so that they could visibly represent themselves to the sight of men. He believed that in doing this the devil or angel would choose a body or form suitable for the apparition. Bromhall did not say that angels or devils only become visible when they took over corporeal bodies, for they could be seen when incorporeal; they could condense the air into any shape they pleased. But in order to make their images more pleasing to Man they possessed a corporeal body which was familiar to him. Thus there is a distinction between the visible appearance of such spirits to men, and the possession by such spirits of the bodies of men. 'That the figure which the Angells take, is in very truth which is made by the absision and dismembering (as a man may say) of the thickening of the Ayre, or by the putrifaction of it, or by the similtude and motion which may be taken of the same matter'. While during possession 'the Angell or Devill so taking any body upon him, is wholly in the whole body which it assumeth, or else in a part thereof, as the Soul is in the Body'.⁷¹ This opinion was in contrast to Thomas Ady, whose argument was based soundly on theological grounds

⁶⁹ J. Wagstaffe, *The Question of Witchcraft debated*, pp. 47-50.

⁷⁰ Gen. 1:21.

⁷¹ T. Bromhall, *A treatise of Specters*, pp. 359-60, 365-6.

and the teachings of Christ. According to Luke 24:39, Christ had said that a spirit was not made of flesh or bone. Therefore to say the devil could condense his body or assume a body or have an apparent body ran contrary to the word of God. 'For if the Devil can have as much as an apparent body, what validity was in the words of Christ'.⁷²

By 1692 it is possible to find even the concept of the devil existing in an incorporeal form being challenged. The anonymous author of *Cacodemon or the Hobgoblin, being a serious inquiry into the Doctrine of Devils* (1692) argued that if devils assumed bodies of air or anything else in the world then 'those bodies must be first made, framed, or created bodies, or els they cannot be bodies, and therefore cannot be assumed as bodies'. The author's arguments were essentially Aristotelian. 'Substances' and 'Accidents' underwent changes much like the miracle of transubstantiation. Out of the dead earth God commanded the substances and accidents of the earth into grass, herbs, trees and so on, creating all life. God was the only one able to change the substance and accidents of matter into the substances and accidents of another object, and was the only creator. Devils, spirits or men did not have this power. Neither did God permit other creatures to create bodies, or to attribute the devil's powers to that of God's, as was argued by many previous writers.⁷³ According to the author it was a 'vain supposition' to believe that God would permit this.⁷⁴ Indeed, during the same decade, even the professed apologist for the belief in the power of witches and the devil, Richard Baxter, seems to have argued that their powers to do evil did not just come from God. He argued that instead of the devil having no power without the leave of God, what was really the case was that he had no power without the permitting will of Mankind. For him there were two pre-conditions to the power of devils to cause evil: 'God's will and the consent of man'.⁷⁵

⁷² T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark*, pp. 109-110.

⁷³ James VI, *Daemonologie*, pp. 22-3; G. Gifford, *A Dialogue*, sg. D3; J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 3, all argued that God provided the devil with his powers.

⁷⁴ CUL, MS Dd, III 84, f. 11, anon., (Philalethes, Eutrapelas), 'Cacodemon or the Hobgoblin' (1692).

⁷⁵ R. Baxter, *The certainty of the world of spirits*, pref., p. 4.

Thus increasingly towards the end of the seventeenth century, we see a more secular approach to evil. Men still believed in the power of the devil, but they only had themselves to blame if they fell for his temptations.

The debate amongst intellectuals concerning the make up of the devil's form had other more indirect consequences, specifically in the way it was believed the devil was thought to fraternise with human-kind. The belief that the devil was a formless thing of air, who needed to inhabit the bodies of material earthly creatures, grew increasingly attractive to Protestants in the 1640s because it helped to establish the superiority of God by making the devil reliant on God's creations. Also temptation by the devil in the guise of another creature could be explained away as a lack of godliness. However, one of the most important aspects of the debate surrounding the various forms the devil could take was its relevance to witchcraft belief, for such explanations validated the popular belief in the witch's familiar. Like so much of demonological belief, the idea of the devil using an animal to tempt mankind was nothing new, indeed it had its origins in biblical times. The beguiling of Eve by the devil in the guise of a serpent was a prime example,⁷⁶ and such images were resurrected during the Interregnum and Restoration. The serpent in particular was often used in seventeenth-century ballads as a symbol of evil. One ballad, published in 1664, relates how a maid-servant, Mary Dulson, whilst asleep on the grass, swallowed an adder and nourished it within her belly. After a period of sickness she vomited up 14 young adders and 1 adult adder. In the ballad itself the snake is associated with evil and deception, and mention is made of the beguiling of Eve by the serpent. Furthermore, the entering of the adder into the sleeping maid-servant is analogous with the possession of the unwary by the devil and this is reinforced by the first verse of the ballad which contains a reminder for all sinners to repent.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁶ Gen. 3:1-14.

⁷⁷ *A Warning for all such as desire to Sleep upon the Grass: By the Example of Mary Dudson Maid-servant to Mr Phillips a Gardener, dwelling in Kent Street, in the Borough of Southwark* (London, 1664). E. Topsell, *History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents* (London, 1668), pp. 625, 742, points out that 'Serpents do sometimes creep into the mouths of them that are fast asleep'. T. Lupton, in *A Thousand Notable Things* (London, 1650), bk. vi, no. 68, provides a remedy for snake swallowing.

Bible was also used by contemporary writers to reinforce their beliefs concerning the evil of familiars. The preface of the pamphlet account of the trial of the Essex witches in 1645 quotes from the book of Isaiah: 'And when they shall say unto you, seeke unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto Wizards, that peep and that mutter, should not a people seeke unto their God, & c',⁷⁸ and uses this to argue that people should enquire after no other spirit but God.⁷⁹ According to the author 'it is evident, that all spirits that doe suffer themselves to be inquired at, are evill spirits, and therefore Devils'.⁸⁰

The problem with alleging that perfectly normal creatures were in fact demons, or a material form of the devil, was in proving it. This could be done in one of two ways: either the suspected witch could confess he or she had knowledge of this, or evidence could be presented establishing supernatural attributes to the creature. This was frequently achieved by describing the creature suspected to be the witch's familiar in such a way as to stress its abnormality. Indeed this was often the main difference between the description of the alleged familiar given by the accused witch under interrogation, and the description given in evidence by the searcher of the witch. The confession of the suspected witch often contained descriptions that were far more fantastical, to the descriptions provided in evidence by the watchers or searchers. In 1682, when the suspected witch, Mary Trembles, was examined for suspected witchcraft by the Mayor of Bideford in Devon, she admitted that the devil came to her in the shape of a lion and had carnal knowledge with her.⁸¹ One explanation could be that this was psychological. The witch's description came from the imagination, either her's or the interrogator's. The searcher's description of the creature, on the

⁷⁸ Isa. 8:19.

⁷⁹ There are 16 other references to familiar spirits in the Bible, many of which were utilised by seventeenth century writers: Levit. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:11; 1 Sam. 28:3, 7, 8, 9; 2 Kings 21:6, 23:24; 1 Chron. 10:13; 2 Chron. 33:6; Job 19:14; Psalms 41:9; Isiah 19:3, 29:4.

⁸⁰ BL, TT E 296 (35), *A true and exact Relation of the Severall Informations, Examination, and Confessions of the late Witches, arraigned and executed in the County of Essex* (London, 1645), pref.

⁸¹ 'Proceedings against Temporance Lloyd, Mary Trembles and Susanna Edwards, for Witchcraft: 34 Charles II AD, 1682,' in T. B. Howell, *State Trials* (1816), vol. viii, p. 1034.

other hand, was what he or she actually saw, but may have been exaggerated due to fear or an overwrought imagination, or simply a desire to ensure that the witch was condemned. This was a point made as early as 1603 by George Gifford. He had argued that a pet could often be mistaken for the devil especially if the viewer was scared. He pointed out that 'in feare, in the darke men take some littel cat or dog to be an uglie devill'.⁸² Hence, unnatural or strange behaviour was often associated with the alleged familiars observed by the interrogators in order to counter the argument that they were merely observing a normal creature. In 1647 at Ely an innocuous beetle seen coming into the room where the suspected witch Ellen Caryson was being watched, was described by the watchers as moving 'faster then ever he sawe any such thinge before'.⁸³ If all else failed the interrogator or watcher could explain the lack of a familiar by claiming it was invisible. According to John Stearne this was the case with some of those suspected of witchcraft at Huntingdon in 1645. One suspected witch confessed to having an imp suck on her whilst she was talking with others. Another, whom Stearne witnessed, was perceived by her movements to be suckling an imp and later confessed this to Stearne and a JP.⁸⁴

Further evidence that a witch was in contact with a familiar was the tangible objects that were often given to the witch by the familiar. In 1655 Henry More questioned how a witch could be in possession of a tangible object (such as a charm) if that object had been given to the witch by an imaginary thing which had no substance. More used as an example the case of John Winnick of Molseworth, Huntingdonshire, who had lost a purse. He had been visited by a spirit that was 'black and shaggy, and having pawes like a beare, but in the bulk not fully as big as a Coney'. The spirit promised to find his purse if he renounced God. After agreeing to do this, he found that the following morning his purse had been returned. That this was merely a dream or delusion, as many had said, was for More 'a conceipt more

⁸² G. Gifford, *A Dialogue concerning Witches* (London, 1603), sg. K14.

⁸³ CUL, MS E/12, f. 2.

⁸⁴ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 17.

slight and foolish then any dream possible can be. For that receiving of his purse was a palpable and sensible pledge of the truth of all the rest'. Moreover when one took into account that the man was visited daily for 29 years by 3 familiars who sucked from his body, it was plainly ridiculous that such a story should be thought 'nothing but the hanging together of so many *Melancholy Concepts* and *Phansies*'.⁸⁵ Such arguments were also used to show that the familiar was a corporeal creature, even though temporarily possessed by an incorporeal one. This allowed the familiar to interact with the witch in the real world, for an incorporeal spirit could obviously not touch or hold tangible objects.

There was often a very grey area between those who saw the familiar spirit as a separate entity and those who believed the familiar was the actual witch. Indeed some believed the devil could transform a person into a beast or wild animal. Henry More had argued that the devil could yield a person's body 'to such a consistency' and make it pliable to his imagination 'then it is as easie for him to work it into what shape he pleaseth, as it is to work the Aire into such forms and figures as he ordinarily doth'.⁸⁶ If witches could transform themselves into the likeness of animals, as many believed they could, then these animals could not be familiars, rather it implied witches may have had the power of metamorphosis. The familiar implied an external agent affecting the witch, whereas if the witch herself could transform into an animal, then the malevolent spirit must have been within her. Such circumstances were detailed in the trial of Julian Cox before Judge Archer at Taunton Assizes in 1663. A huntsman stated that he had been hunting a hare not far from Julian Cox's home. The hare ran to ground by a bush. When he got there he found Julian Cox with her head down 'groveling on the ground, and her globes [eyes] (as he expressed it) upward'. He also described her as out of breath, as though she had been running. The implication of

⁸⁵ H. More, *An antidote against Atheisme, or, An appeal to the natural faculties of the minde of Man, whether there be not a God* (London, 1655), pp. 187-189. The tale referred to by More appears in BL, TT E 343 (10), *The Witches of Huntingdon, Their Examinations and Confessions; exactly taken by his Majesties Justices of Peace for that County* (London, 1646), pp. 3-4.

⁸⁶ H. More, *An Antidote against Atheisme*, pp. 235-6.

what he had seen resulted in him fleeing back to his home in a state of abject fright.⁸⁷ This case was unusual in that it differed from many other trial accounts which showed the witch being given a familiar after making a contract with the devil. Here it appeared that the witch had the power to change to animal form herself. The belief that the witch had the ability to change into a beast may have owed more to popular belief than demonological writing. The seemingly ageless fear that a cat could smother a baby in its sleep, for example, often resulted in the cat being seen as either an instrument of evil or a witch who had transformed herself into the likeness of a cat. Such circumstances surrounded the case of the suspected witch Joan Peterson in 1652, the notorious 'witch of Wapping'. One of her neighbours had a sick child. Two women watched over the child at night and saw 'a great black cat come to the cradles side, and rock the cradle, whereupon one of the women took up the fire fork to strike at it, and it immediately vanished'.⁸⁸ It was suspected that Peterson had actually transformed herself into the cat in order to harm the baby. John Stearne also gives an example in his *Confirmation of Witches*, of a witch with the power to change into an animal. He described how a suspected witch at St. Neatts in Huntingdonshire, after being swum and found to float, was released. Soon after a man saw a dog in his yard which he suspected might be the devil, although it is not related why he thought this. His son struck it a few blows and their horse bit it on the neck. Later the suspected witch was sought out and it was found that she had bite marks on her neck and bruises on her body.⁸⁹

Faced with the evidence that a witch had the same injuries as an animal, it may have been natural for many people to conclude that the witch could change form to an animal. However there is a certain amount of confusion here. Similar sympathetic beliefs existed, for example, between the witch and familiar - a creature thought to be

⁸⁷ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 192.

⁸⁸ BL, TT E 659 (18), *The witch of Wapping or An Exact and Perfect Relation, of the Life and Devilish Practises of Joan Peterson, that dwelt in Spruce Island, near Wapping* (London, 1652), pp. 5-6.

⁸⁹ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 19.

totally separate from the witch. Alexander Roberts related how this sympathetic link between the witch and her familiar could often result in her downfall. He explained how a suspected witch, Mary Smith, sent her imps (a toad and two crabs) to the home of Edmund Newton 'to do evil'. One of the servants at the house 'tooke that toad, put it into the fire, where it made a groaning noyse for one quarter of an houre before it was consumed; during which time Mary Smith who sent it, did endure, (as was reported) torturing paines, testifying the felt grieffe by her out-cryes then made'.⁹⁰ A similar account can be found in the autobiography of Goodwin Wharton, when his friend Mrs Parish tells him of a child who went lame after being bitten on the leg by a large toad. The toad was then thrown into the fire. The following morning the school mistress of the child was visited by Goodwife Parrott, a reputed witch, 'for something for a burne which she pretended by some accident to have received'.⁹¹ Likewise a sympathetic link between familiar and witch was demonstrated during the trial of the Norfolk witches, Amy Demy and Rose Cullender, who were both executed in 1682. Dr Jacob, of Great Yarmouth, advised the victim of their witchcraft to hang a blanket over the fireplace of their home, and that anything caught in it was be thrown into the fire. A frog was captured in this way and thrown into the fire. Later it was reported that Amy Demy had suffered burns to her body even though there was no fire lit in her house.⁹²

Although anecdotal evidence detailing the sympathetic links between witches and familiars seem to be common in English pamphlets during this period, it has not been possible to corroborate this by referring to any recognised seventeenth-century demonological treatises purporting to give advice on the detection of witches. While it may be true that demonologists during the early part of the seventeenth century did mention that witches worshipped the devil in the form of a familiar spirit, and to this

⁹⁰ A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, pp. 57-8.

⁹¹ BL, Add. MSS 20,006, f. 38.

⁹² *A Tryal* (London, 1682), p. 6; cited in G. Geis & I. Bunn, 'Sir Thomas Browne and Witchcraft. A cautionary tale for contemporary law and psychiatry', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* (1981), vol. iv, pp. 1-11.

purpose would have had teats on their bodies from which the familiars gained sustenance, none seem to have claimed that a sympathetic link existed between the familiar and the witch.⁹³ However later in the century such accounts, always enshrined in popular lore, may have become legitimised by the intellectual arguments professing the devil to be a spirit rather than a creature in its own right. Belief in the familiar therefore became more important because it tied in with the new ideas concerning the physiology of the devil - that is the incorporeal devil had to take over a corporeal body in order to be seen.

The popular belief in the sympathetic link between witch and familiar may also have derived from the intellectual opinion that the attributes of an animal could be passed on to a man if he consumed its flesh. In 1662 Henry More, in his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, argued a person's character could be changed by imbibing some of the blood of an animal. In other words a sympathetic link was established between the person and the animal through its blood. He gives some bizarre examples, including 'one that being long fed with *Swine's* blood, took a special pleasure in wallowing and tumbling himself in the mire; as also of another Girle who being nourished up with *Goat's* milk, would skip like a *Goat* and brouze on trees as Goats use to doe'. Another who ate the brains of a bear became 'of *Bear-like* disposition'.⁹⁴ For More this was all evidence that ingested substances could affect the imagination of people. But for others this was proof that one could transform into a beast by consuming a part of it. In a way this mirrored the miracle of transubstantiation, in which one consumed the body and blood of Christ and thus gained the attributes of His goodness.

Running parallel to such beliefs was the conviction that the disease of lycanthropy was also one of the imagination and did not result in any physical change. At the beginning of the seventeenth century William Perkins had written about

⁹³ James VI, *Daemonologie*; BL, TT E 307 (11), *The Laws against Witches and Conjurations*; W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*.

⁹⁴ H. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, p. 6.

lycanthropy in the context that it was another demonstration of the all-knowing power of the devil. The devil knew the constitution of men and took advantage of them, especially the melancholic. This corrupted their imaginations into believing they were wolves or other creatures.⁹⁵ This idea was taken one step further in 1615 by Jean de Nynauld's, *De La Lycanthropie*, who pointed out that the devil could not create new forms, only God could do this. However the devil could affect the imagination of the afflicted so that they believed they had been transformed into another creature.⁹⁶

When Dom Augustin Calmet, writing in 1759, argued that 'shape-changers' could transform themselves into the form of another creature, often after they had ingested either the blood or the flesh of the creature they wished to transform to, he pointed out that any such change was purely imaginary and no physical transformation had actually taken place. He indicated this had been a problem amongst mankind since biblical times. Nebuchadnezer, the King of Babylon, for example, 'imagined himself to be changed into an ox'.⁹⁷ In addition Calmet observed, 'it is still common enough to meet with people who imagine themselves to be kings, cardinals, or noblemen, and divert themselves highly with these agreeable fancies'. Likewise when the author described the belief that there were women in Italy who could turn men into horses by giving them a potion, he argued that it did not matter if these transformations were real or not. Rather the important point was that 'the persons were strongly possessed with a *notion* of their being changed into horses, asses, or mules; and acted accordingly'.⁹⁸

All this did not mean learned writers during the early seventeenth century did not believe that physical change could not actually take place amongst organic matter. The miracle of transubstantiation, was a case in point. However, the belief that matter

⁹⁵ W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, p. 24.

⁹⁶ Jean de Nynauld, *De la Lycanthropie, transformation, et extase des sorciers* (Paris, 1615), *passim*; cited in S. Clark, 'The Scientific status of demonology,' in S. Vicker, ed., *Occult and Scientific mentalities in the Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 361.

⁹⁷ Dan. 4.

⁹⁸ (My italics). D. A. Calmet, *Dissertations upon the Apparitions of Angels, Daemons, and Ghosts* (London, 1759), pp. 133-4.

could spontaneously metamorphose into something else increasingly began to be challenged on scientific grounds during the 1660s. In 1668 Francesco Redi, the Italian natural philosopher, in a series of experiments involving the placing of pieces of decaying meat in containers open to the elements, some of which were covered with fine mesh, demonstrated that dead organic matter did not spontaneously corrupt and produce maggots. He discovered that it was only the pieces of meat which had not been covered with mesh which had apparently spontaneously changed form to maggots. He showed such a process was reliant on the accessibility of flies getting to the meat and laying their eggs on it rather than any physical change that took place in the meat.⁹⁹ Such experiments helped to disprove the myth amongst the intellectual elite that metamorphosis could actually take place and helped to reinforce the claims of earlier writers that such afflictions were purely imaginary. However, they were important in one other way. Whereas before the 1660s it had been thought that the imagination could be affected by the evil machinations of the devil, this increasingly seemed to be incompatible with the evidence of science. Although Calmet had not been the first to claim lycanthropy was a disease of the imagination, it is significant that he failed to mention any demonic involvement in such afflictions. His views represented a fundamental change in superstitious belief. Lycanthropy was still felt to be a disease of the imagination, but it was now no longer seen as being instigated by the devil. The experiments conducted at the end of the seventeenth century, coupled with the decreased belief in the power of the devil to achieve any physical change, helped to remove the demonic stigma from the affliction and instead placed the disease firmly in the realms of mental illness.

The belief in the potency and reality of familiars also shared many of the characteristics of belief in the devil. Just as temptation by the devil could be used to explain why a person may have committed a particularly abhorrent crime, so too could the familiar be used as a scapegoat for evil in the case of witchcraft. It was often the

⁹⁹ B. Easlea, *Witchhunting, Magic and the New Philosophy: An introduction to debates of the Scientific Revolution, 1450-1750* (London, 1980), p. 145.

case that a suspected witch would blame the malignant act for which she may have been accused on her familiars rather than her own malice. Indeed some actually considered it necessary for their health to do evil. Thus when the accused witch Margaret Landish (1645) became ill, it was because 'her devils were not engaged in mischief'. Likewise the suspected witch old Cherrie (1646) was said to have 'had to keep his employed to save himself torment'.¹⁰⁰ In addition, familiars did not always have to do evil. Sometimes they could be employed to act as protectors to help people. This was certainly the case when Margery Sparrow sent two of her imps to her husband, who was a soldier, to protect him from harm.¹⁰¹ Also during the Mathew Hopkins witch hunt in Essex, one of the suspected witches admitted to sending three imps to Prince Rupert at the start of the civil war in order to help him.¹⁰² The belief that during the English Civil War witches were sending imps to kill one side or another seems to have also been a popular one. One Suffolk minister told Thomas Ady, that one of the witches recently hanged at Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk had sent her imps into the army to kill Parliamentary soldiers, whilst another witch had sent her imps to kill the King's soldiers.¹⁰³ Thus increasing factional tensions within local communities during the English Civil War seem to have resulted in an adaptation of witchcraft lore in order to attack those who may have supported the wrong cause.

In a similar way that the devil could be used for propaganda purposes, so too could the familiar. Moreover, it was not just the witch's familiar that was employed in this way but also animals in general. Perhaps the most famous example of this during the English Civil War period was the series of pamphlets published in 1642 concerning the various familiar spirits possessed by Prince Rupert as part of the propaganda campaign directed at 'Cavalierism' in general, and the character of Prince Rupert in battle, by the supporters of Parliament. For our purposes the importance of

¹⁰⁰ C. E. Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism* (London, 1933), pp. 68-9.

¹⁰¹ C. E. Ewen, *Witch Hunting and Witch Trials* (London, 1929), p. 309.

¹⁰² B. Capp, 'Popular culture and the English Civil War', *History of European Ideas* (1989), vol. x, no. 1, pp. 31-41.

¹⁰³ T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark*, p. 114.

the pamphlets is the imagery chosen for such an attack. The language of the familiar, witchcraft and the devil were all employed to maximum effect because they were images that were known to be both emotive and popular.

The abilities of Prince Rupert's so-called 'devil-dog' included prophesy, locating lost or concealed property, communication, invisibility and being weapon-proof. All these powers were commonly thought to be possessed by witches.¹⁰⁴ In addition, like the implied sexual relation between the witch and the familiar, one sees a similar correlation with Prince Rupert's dog. It is described as 'strumpet-like', continually kissing the prince and lying in bed with him. A pamphlet published a few weeks later described similar licentious behaviour in another of Prince Rupert's pets,

Figure 1: 'Parliament's Unspotted Bitch'



'Parliament's unspotted bitch', a counter propaganda illustration issued by the Royalists denying the allegation that Prince Rupert's dog was a witch.

Source: BL, TT E 92 (13), *Parliament's unspotted Bitch: In answer to Prince Rupert's dog called Boy, and his malignant She-Monkey* (London, 1642).

¹⁰⁴ BL, TT E 245 (2), *Observations upon Prince Ruperts white dog called Boy. carefully taken by T. B. For that purpose employed by some of quality in the City of London* (London, 1642), pp. 1-3.

this time a monkey. The monkey is described as a temptress to the prince, forever tumbling so that its dress, which it apparently wore, 'fell about her eares' so that all could see. Indeed 'if a Puritan should behold her he would verily affirme that she were the little whore of Babylon'. Often the monkey would ride the prince's dog conjuring up images of the whore of Babylon riding the Beast of Revelation.¹⁰⁵ The satirical attacks on Prince Rupert also played on contemporary popular notions about the dangers of upsetting a known witch. It was essential, for example, to remain on friendly terms with Prince Rupert's dog, for otherwise some misfortune would surely

Figure 2: Prince Rupert's Monkey



Prince Rupert's pet monkey, which was said to have married, then cuckolded, a Cavalier officer.

Source: BL, TT E 93 (9), *The Humorous Tricks and conceits of Prince Ruperts malignant She-Monkey, discovered to the world before her marriage* (London, 1642).

¹⁰⁵ BL, TT E 90 (25), *An exact description of Prince Ruperts Malignant she-Monkey, a great Delinquent: Having approved her selfe a better servant, then his white dog called BOY* (London,

befall those unfortunate enough to upset him. It was candidly pointed out by the author that most of those who were killed at Edgehill 'had injured the Dogg's reputation some way or other'.¹⁰⁶

The series of pamphlets published in 1642 besmirching the character of Prince Rupert also illustrates the collapse of accepted norms prevalent before the civil war. Royalty could now be publicly ridiculed in a fashion which must have been totally inconceivable to most people prior to 1640. Moreover, the association of a high-born prince with witchcraft meant that popular witchcraft beliefs could be validated and legitimised. If a prince could be accused of practising witchcraft, then nobody was safe from persecution. Pamphlets of this sort, although not wholly to blame for the re-emergence of witchcraft persecution during the mid-1640s, were undoubtedly a contributory factor. The association of the Royalist cause with witchcraft may have been especially popular, particularly in East Anglia where the formation of the Eastern Association in March 1644 had consolidated parliamentary support in the area.¹⁰⁷

While some political tracts found it convenient to utilise the imagery of the witch's familiar in an effort to attack particular figures, many other pamphlets stressed the abnormal behaviour of animals in general in order to convey a feeling of the supernatural or evil. Horses, dogs and cats were all believed to be more closely linked to the natural world than Man, and as a result it was thought that they were often able to instinctively detect spirits or ghosts. It was also widely believed such animals possessed second sight. Horses and dogs were most commonly attributed with this power as they were able to perceive 'by the sight and smell wandering Spirits, Witches and Spectres'.¹⁰⁸ Joseph Glanvill was certainly aware of this when he related

1642), p. 3; *The Humerous Tricks and conceipts of Prince Ruperts malignant She-Monkey, discovered to the world before her marriage* (London, 1642), p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ BL, TT E 245 (2), *Observations upon Prince Ruperts white dog called Boy* (London, 1642), p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait, eds., *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* (London, 1922), vol. i, pp. 417, 493; J. S. Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces* (London, 1976), pp. 62-3, 72-4, 84-6; C. Holmes, *The Eastern Association and the English Civil War* (London, 1974), passim; R. T. Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch Belief* (London, 1947), pp. 153-4.

¹⁰⁸ J. Beaumont, *A historical, physiological and theological Treatise of Spirits*, p. 116.

the account of the so-called demon drummer of Tidworth. He described the condition of his horse in the stables the following morning as 'all in a sweat' so that he 'lookt as if he had been rid all night', and used this as evidence that something supernatural had taken place the previous night.¹⁰⁹ The behaviour of animals was also useful in corroborating sightings of ghosts or spirits. This was especially the case if the spirit could not be detected by any one else apart from the narrator of the story. In an account written by Henry Lovel in 1643, for example, he described his stay in the Ballinarter castle, owned by one of the FitzGarrets, in the Province of Munster. The author's first warning that something was amiss in his chamber was when his dog began to 'shew great feare' and hid under the bed. Later during the night and the next night he was haunted by an apparition in his room.¹¹⁰ Likewise, the example of abnormal behaviour in animals was used to confirm an abnormality in nature. In an account of the appearance of an apparition of a pool of blood in 'Garroton', Leicestershire, one of the first indications that something was not right was when cattle refused to drink from it and then a few days later they would not come near it.¹¹¹

As well as citing the supernatural sixth-sense believed to have been possessed by animals in order to demonstrate abnormalities in nature, unscrupulous propagandists also employed such techniques during the 1650s in order to disparage nonconformity. In order to prove that the fits undergone by Quakers during their meditations contained a supernatural element, the abnormal behaviour of animals in the vicinity of such gatherings would often be cited. In 1655 the shrieking and howling of some entranced Quakers meeting at London not only frightened the spectators, but also 'caused the Dogs to bark, the Swine to cry, and the Cattel [to] run about, to the astonishment of all that heard them. And this was chiefly occasioned by

¹⁰⁹ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 105.

¹¹⁰ H. Lovel, *Horrid and Strange newes from Ireland* (London, 1643).

¹¹¹ BL, TT E 303 (22), *The most Strange and Wonderfull apperation of blood in a poole at Garroton in Leicester-shire* (London, 1645).

their quaking and trembling postures'.¹¹² Animals could also be used to parody religious ceremonies. A case in the Diocesan Act Book for the Diocese of Oxford in 1662 relates how two men were summoned for baptising a cat in the font at Henley church.¹¹³

In addition the 1650s saw a host of learned works linking popular belief in the supernatural power of animals with belief in God. Perhaps the most virulent was the vitriolic arguments that took place between Henry More and Richard Vaughan during the early 1650s.¹¹⁴ In *Anima Magica Abscondita* (1650), Vaughan argued that God offered his wisdom not only to mankind but also to animals. How else did the spider learn the skill of casting his web in a perfect spiral? Or the hare to counter-march in order to throw off pursuit? All these skills were not simply just some instinct, but had been taught or programmed by an overall creator. Nature was unable to operate without a tutor and therefore nature was not merely an abstract thing but a substantial active breath proceeding from the creator.¹¹⁵ Despite being motivated by a desire to prove the existence of God, Vaughan's arguments were regarded by many as heterodox. His pantheistic view of the world with nature being akin to the actual deity was strongly attacked by Henry More. For him the idea that the Earth was a being was absurd. He accused Vaughan of being a magician, citing his over-long Latin titles and even went as far to say that he was on a par with 'that troublesome fellow, Hopkins the Witch-finder'. Concerning Vaughan's views that animals were imbued with some form of limited intelligence, More was particularly scathing:

Sure I am, that if any skilfull Cook, Chymist should take out *Philalethes* brains, and shred them as small as mincemeat, and tumble them never so much up and down with a trencher fork, he would not

¹¹² BL, TT E 835 (10), *The Quakers terrible vision; Or, The Devils Progress to the City of London* (London, 1655), pp. 3-4.

¹¹³ ORO, MS C4, f. 65.

¹¹⁴ For an account of this debate see F. B. Burnham, 'The More-Vaughan Controversy: The Revolt Against Philosophical Enthusiasm', *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1974), 35: 33-49.

¹¹⁵ R. Vaughan, [Eugenius Philalethes], *Anima Magica Abscondita; Or A Discourse of the universall Spirit of Nature, With his strange, abstruse, miraculous Ascent, and descent* (London, 1650), pp. 14-15, 17.

discover by this diligent discussion any substantiall form of his brains whereby they may be distinguished from what lies in a Calfes head.¹¹⁶

In addition to such arguments, the belief that many creatures had supernatural powers or intelligence was increasingly emphasised by the publication during the Interregnum of bestiaries and encyclopaedias detailing all manner of animals both real and mythological.¹¹⁷ Some creatures, such as the basilisk for example, whose stare was believed to petrify, were purely mythological. However other creatures, such as the wolf, were believed to have distinct supernatural powers. It was said that if a female wolf saw a man before he saw the wolf then this would make him hoarse. In addition a dog that entered the shadow of a hyena would never be able to bark again.¹¹⁸

Animals and birds were also thought to be harbingers of ill omen or great fortune. This was particularly the case with birds which were often deliberately employed as auguries. If a man went to a tall tower and called out to the heavens, he could observe from which side the birds appeared - if from the left this signified good luck and if from the right bad luck. During the seventeenth century it was common for people to make observations upon their daily lives based on the appearances of various types of birds. From the chattering of Magpies it was possible to tell if one was to be visited by strangers. If Ravens flew over the house this signified a death in the household. Similarly the crying of owls near a house at night, or a Cricket crying within the house portended a death in the family. Dogs howling at night near a house where somebody was sick meant a person was doomed to die. If a hare crossed one's path it was a sign of bad luck. According to Nathaniel Holmes, this was taken so seriously that if a pregnant woman had her path crossed by such a creature, her friends would cut or tear 'some of the clothes off that Woman with Childe to prevent (as they imagined) the ill luck that might befall her'.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ H. More, [Alazonomastix Philalethes], *Observations upon Anthroposophia Theomagica, and Anima Magica Abscondita* (London, 1650), pp. 2, 49.

¹¹⁷ E. Topsell, *History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents*; T. M., *Friar Bacon his Discovery of the Miracles of Art, Nature, and Magick. Faithfully translated out of Dr Dee's own Copy* (London, 1659).

¹¹⁸ T. M., *Friar Bacon his Discovery*, p. 11.

¹¹⁹ N. Holmes, *Daemonologie and Theologie. The first, The malady, demonstrating the diabolical arts, and Devillish Arts, and devillish hearts of men. The second, The Remedy: Demonstrating, God a rich*

In many of these cases it was not simply a matter of the power of animals centring on man's interpretation of their behaviour. It was genuinely believed by many that certain animals had supernatural powers. Moreover, these issues of whether animals possessed any supernatural powers seem to have also been specifically incorporated into the debates on theological questions entered into by philosophical writers during the two decades following the English Civil War. Although Henry More had argued against Richard Vaughan, in 1650, that animals were imbued with a limited intelligence, he did not subscribe to the Cartesian idea that animals were without souls. Rather, what he wished to achieve was to show that animals did have immortal souls, like man, but that they were of an inferior kind to man.¹²⁰ However, perhaps the greatest significance of such arguments was that they could be used to prove the existence of supernatural powers in men as well as animals. If animals were inferior to men but still possessed these powers, then it followed that men, who were in every way superior to animals, also possessed these powers. Moreover, it therefore followed that such supernatural powers would be far more potent if used by humans.¹²¹ Thus it is possible to see broad similarities existing amongst the supernatural powers of animals and humans. Just as it was believed that the stare of a female wolf could make a man go hoarse, for example, so too could the stare of a woman who had ceased to menstruate damage the sight of a baby.¹²² It was in this way that the supernatural power of animals and man became linked through the witch's familiar.

supply of Good (London, 1650), pp. 55, 59-60; K. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 286, 747, 750, for numerous other examples of the appearance of animals being used as prodigies.

¹²⁰ B. Easlea, *Witchhunting, Magic, and the New Philosophy*, p. 143, pointed out the problem of reconciling the Cartesian idea that only men had souls because it was only men who had the ability to reason and therefore animals were mere automata. More had disagreed with this on the grounds of common sense and observation.

¹²¹ More was adamant familiars existed, for example, and also believed in the potency of the power of animals. See: H. More, *An antidote against Atheisme* (London, 1655), p. 9; *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (London, 1662), p. 6.

¹²² P. Crawford, 'Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth Century England,' *Past and Present*, 91 (1981), p. 59.

* * *

Throughout the seventeenth century belief in the devil, demons, animals and witches was inextricably linked. However, from the start of the English Civil War the intellectual debates over such matters intensified to such an extent that they spilled over into the realms of popular tracts and were constantly employed for propaganda purposes. During the seventeenth century in England the devil had been portrayed by the intellectual élite as inferior to God in every way. However, he appears to have been His equal when it came to the influence that was exerted over ordinary people's lives. For the intellectual élite it went without saying that belief in the devil was essential if one was to believe in God; demonologists noted that not to believe in the existence of the devil was akin to atheism.¹²³ This view also held good with respect to the belief in witchcraft. John Gaule argued that to disbelieve in witchcraft was akin to atheism: 'Hee that will needs persuade himself that there are no Witches, would as faire be persuaded, that there is no Devill; and hee that can already beleieve that there is no Devill, will ere long beleieve that there is no God'.¹²⁴ The theological belief of many demonologists validated the existence of the devil, for it was impossible to believe in one without believing in the other. Belief in ultimate evil was necessary in order to define ultimate good.

The devil's influence over mankind seems to have been portrayed in a different way amongst the populace. For them the devil was not just the opposite of God, a necessary evil or an essential balance to the goodness of God. Instead the devil was an ever present force, useful as a scapegoat for any calamity or unexplained phenomenon. Thus by the seventeenth century the devil had achieved his alliance with mankind through a host of perceived superstitious beliefs. The trouble was that many of these came into conflict with Protestant divines because they were seen as papist. This was especially the case during the troubled years of the English Civil

¹²³ In 1597 James VI had stressed this very point in his *Daemonologie* (p. 55): 'who denyeth the power of the Devill, would likewise denie the power of God ... For since the Devill is the verie contrarie opposite of God, there can be no better way to God by the contrarie'.

¹²⁴ J. Gaule, *Select cases of conscience touching witchcrafts*, pp. 194-5.

War. Witchcraft, familiar spirits, demons, incubi, succubi, charmers, cunning folk, the popular belief of which was all accepted, were seen by many as attributing the devil with too much power. Thus the attack by many demonologists, was not directed at the devil, but at the host of beliefs that were attributed to him.

Running counter to the godly condemnation of popular beliefs was the utilisation by many factions of exactly the same beliefs during the Civil War for propaganda purposes. The devil was portrayed not only as a scapegoat for individual acts of evil or misfortune, but also as a powerful propaganda tool to be used against political or religious opponents. In this way elite debates and popular belief overlapped, and this probably represented a distinguishing characteristic of the period 1640-70. Moreover, it was not just belief in the devil and witchcraft that had been used in this way: accounts of ghosts, apparitions, portents, monstrous births, miraculous healing, were all published during this period, and many of them were used to demonstrate religious or political points. The problem was that tracts of this sort helped to legitimise existing popular witchcraft beliefs, previously repressed by the authorities prior to the Civil War, and paved the way for a resurgence of witch hunting in England between 1640-70 on a scale not seen since the end of the sixteenth century.

CHAPTER 3

Ghosts, Apparitions, and Prodigies: Superstition or signs from God?

One consequence of the rise of fundamentalist Protestantism during the 1640s was the increased debate amongst contemporaries about the relevance and meaning of reports of apparitions, ghosts, monstrous births and strange visions in the sky. Some saw them as direct signs or portents from God because of the sinfulness of mankind, whilst others thought such reports were superstitious nonsense. Publication of accounts of this nature reached their peak during the English Civil War, partly because of the removal of censorship from printing and also because many felt the political and social upheaval caused by the Civil War heralded the end of the world and the beginning of Christ's rule on Earth.¹ The period thus resulted in the publication of a huge quantity of prophetic tracts, many of which preached Millenarian ideas. By 1649 there were some 80 books published in England on the subject.²

However, it is not the intention in this chapter to merely analyse the Millenarian aspect of these writings. Instead the exploitation of popular beliefs by the authors of such works will be studied. Many of these works sought to exploit popular superstition as a ready means of reinforcing the dominant religious ideologies of the time. While it is true many of these printed accounts are at best unreliable and at worst total lies, often penned for some ulterior motive, this is not necessarily an impediment to their use as historical sources. Whether ghosts or apparitions were genuinely seen, imagined, or the reports were simply made-up, is not strictly relevant to this study, although the psychological aspects of such experiences will be examined in more detail later on. Of more importance is the use such imagery was put to, whether it was for propaganda purposes or to further some political or theological

¹ For a study of millenarianism in the 1640s see: B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men. A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972), chap. 2.

² K. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 168.

cause. In addition the changes in the interpretation of these works will be analysed over the three decades between 1640 and 1670.

Although the Reformation had resulted in a denial of the belief that miracles could still be worked directly by God, it was still felt by many that God was able to warn mankind of impending disaster or calamity through supernatural means. The astrologer William Lilly was in no doubt as to the cause of the various apparitions reported throughout this period: 'I conceive it the finger of God, or some extravagant excursion of nature; these unperfect mist things ingendered in the aire seldome chancing without cause of admiration in our inferiour Orbe and Common-Wealth, as all conversant Histories doe well know'.³ Likewise the preamble to a pamphlet published in 1655, pointed out that

Before God sends any Plague to a Nation, hee firsts gives them warning, sometimes by Apparitions, sometimes by Visions, sometimes by Monstrous Births, sometimes by Sects, Schisms, and devisions, sometimes by Thunder and Lightning, unnaturall Tides, & c. and innumerable wayes that the Lord can use to forewarn us of an approaching judgement, the Minevites must first have the Prophet Jonas going through their street.⁴

According to one writer the reasons God sent such signs were threefold:

to exhort every wise Christian, not to put far away the evil day, building upon a vaine confidence, and flattering themselves with fallacious hopes, and groundlesse collections, promising peace to themselves when the judgements of God are even at their dores ... The next use will be a use of Admonition to all sorts of people to be very headfull of their wayes ... to draw us to a serious consideration, and to a diligent examination, what the cause is that so much bloud is emptied, and drawn out of the veines of this land by Civill warre.⁵

Such an extract also demonstrates how the English Civil War was used as an opportunity to preach that God was warning mankind of the impending second coming and the beginning of the thousand year rule of Revelation.

³ BL, TT E 4 (5), W. Lilly, *Supernatural Sights and Apparitions seen in London, June 30, 1644. Interpreted* (London, 1644).

⁴ BL, TT E 853 (13), *A Warning Piece for the World, or, A Watch-Word to England* (London, 1655), p. 32.

⁵ BL, TT E 612 (16), J. S., *Teratologia: or A Discovery of God's wonders, manifested in former and modern times By Bloudy Raine, and Waters* (London, 1650), p. 8.

However, the sighting of apparitions and visions was not something peculiar to this period. Many writers were keen to stress the historical and biblical precedent for such visions, although this was probably achieved more to reinforce the existing ideas

Figure 3: An Apparition Seen in the Sky at Hertford, 1655



Source: BL, TT E 853 (13), *A Warning Piece for the World, or, A Watch-Word to England* (London, 1655).

that such visions had been sent by God, rather than to disprove the idea that they were unique to the times. The anonymous writer of *A sign from Heaven* published in 1642, pointed out that

fiery impressions were seene in the ayre in sundry places of *Germany*, both before the battell of *Prague*, and about the coming of the most victorious King of *Sweden*, towards the battels of *Leipsich* and *Nordlingen*, and upon sundry other occasions, he that will may read in the *Chronicles* of that Nation. And if men duly consider what strange alteration followed those heavenly admonitions, it will be no difficult thing to fore-see what our selves whose door the staffe now standeth may expect in this Kingdome.⁶

Similarly writers were keen to stress the fact that God had sent warnings of calamity ever since the Creation. One licensed pamphlet published in 1646 lamented

Incredulity hath always been the forerunner of misery since the Creation; the old World would not be warned by Noah's building the Arke until the flood came, Paroah would not be warned by the Gods Judgements till hee was swallowed up of the Red-Sea; nay, as Abraham said in the parable to Dives, should one arise from the dead yet they would not believe; therefore because these warnings would not serve; the Lorde, who is slow to wrath and of much mercy, gave signes

⁶ BL, TT E 111 (2), *A sign from Heaven: Or, A Fearfull and Terrible Noise heard in the Ayre at Alborrow in the County of Suffolk, on Thursday the 4 day of August at 5 of the clock in the afternoon* (London, 1642), p. 1.

from Heaven unto the Jews, to forewarn them of their approaching destruction, but they regarded it not.⁷

Henry More, writing in 1655, also pointed out the biblical precedent for the sightings of apparitions. Before the slaughter of 60,000 Jews in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV, Epiphanes 'The Illustrious' (215-164 BC),⁸ the historian there wrote

that through all the City for the space of fourty dayes there was seen *Horsemen* running in the air in Cloth of gold, and arm'd with Lances, like a band of Souldiers, and Troops of Horsemen in array encountering and running one against another, with shaking of shields and multitudes of pikes, and drawing of swords, and casting of darts, and glittering of golden ornaments, and harness of all sorts.⁹

Much of this type of argument, using precedent in order to reinforce the belief that God was intervening in the world of man, reflected the fear amongst many of the growing spread of atheism. However, atheism did not necessarily have the same connotation to contemporaries as it does to us now. In 1642 one pamphlet defined atheists as 'people who would have no church-government ... but live in an independent way'.¹⁰ No mention is made of not believing in any deity, rather it seems there was more concern about the failure to recognise the church. Indeed Michael Hunter has argued that atheism in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century meant that a person was merely a nonconformist. The word was used like 'witchcraft' or 'Puritanism', to cover a wide range of heresies rather than unbelief in a deity.¹¹ However by the mid-seventeenth century it is possible to detect a change. Many feared that the existence of a deity was being indirectly challenged by those who attacked the belief that God no longer intervened in the affairs of mankind. It was accepted that God had intervened in the past by sending prodigies to mankind. If it could be shown that similar prodigies were being experienced by people in the seventeenth century then this could be interpreted as proof God existed.

⁷ BL, TT E 340 (33), *Severall Apparitions seems in the Ayre, at the Hague in Holland, upon the 21 day of May last past 1646, about one of the clocke in the afternoone* (London, 1646), pp. 1-2.

⁸ Described in 2 *Maccabees*, Chp. 5.

⁹ H. More, *An antidote against Atheisme*, p. 243.

¹⁰ BL, TT E 180 (11), *The Divisions of the Church of England* (London, 1642), pp. 1-2.

¹¹ M. Hunter, 'The Problem of "Atheism" in Early Modern England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 35 (1985), 135-57, p. 136.

Linked to the fear of atheism was the development of the idea that belief in the spirit-world was a necessary precondition to belief in God. At the beginning of the seventeenth century many Protestant divines saw the appearance of apparitions and visions as punishments for sin and thus viewed them as evil in origin. For James VI it was proof of demonic manipulation in the battle for souls. He argued that since all visions and prophesies had ceased with the coming of Christ, all spirits appearing in this form were evil and therefore had been sent by the devil. Thus he stressed the importance of belief in the devil in order to believe in God.¹² Belief in the devil was therefore a foregone conclusion for most people. The problem arose with the beliefs that many felt demonic in origin, while others felt were divine in origin. This came to a head during the second half of the seventeenth century, when the lines of argument underwent a radical departure from the previously held belief that all visions were demonic. The fear of atheism was still present but the emphasis had now changed. In 1655 Henry More was still able to say:

a contemptuous misbelief of such like Narrations concerning *spirits*, and an endeavour of making them all ridiculous and incredible, is a dangerous Prelude to *Atheism* it selfe, or else a more close and crafty proffession and insinuation of it. For assuredly that saying was nothing so true in Politicks, *No Bishop, no King*; as this is in Metaphysics, *No Spirit, no God*.¹³

Like many others More felt such apparitions had been sent by God, whereas earlier writers, such as James VI, had felt such visions had been sent by the devil. More made it quite plain on the first page of his book that the purpose of writing it was simply to prove 'That there is a God'.¹⁴ In doing this More was demonstrating that for him atheism meant unbelief in a deity, rather than heresy.

In addition the fear that atheism was spreading was compounded by the growing scepticism of the élite towards superstitious belief. The trouble was many earlier religious writers had condemned superstitious belief as papist and had urged people to

¹² James VI, *Daemonologie*, pp. 61, 55.

¹³ H. More, *An antidote against Atheisme*, p. 278.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

put such beliefs behind them.¹⁵ This encouraged the notion amongst many that the existence of ghosts, witches and the host of other superstitious beliefs may have been nothing more than mere country fables. However, the danger was that such scepticism may also have led to a more cynical attitude about the existence of God. As a result the whole concept of superstition appears to have undergone a remodelling. During the second half of the seventeenth century it was pointed out that unbelief in ghosts and witches was often a prelude to atheism. In the preface to *The certainty of the World of Spirits*, Richard Baxter made it clear that one of the reasons he had written the book was to convince those who argued that God could not exist because ghosts did not exist, were wrong. Although his book was an attempt to prove the existence of spirits, this was not to reinforce superstitious or popular belief, but to prove the existence of God.¹⁶ Such works highlighted the fear that attacks linking popery with superstition were damaging the church and fostering the greater evil of atheism.

One way it could be demonstrated that God existed was by proving He was directly intervening in the affairs of mankind. During the 1640s many writers took advantage of the relaxing of the restrictions on the press in order to publish accounts of what they believed were examples of God's judgement on the sinfulness of mankind. These pamphlets often provide useful information about some of the social beliefs of local communities. Perhaps a good example of this was the widespread hostility directed against greedy merchants who hoarded grain during times of dearth. In 1647 the poor of Chelmsford complained that the dearth was caused by 'many loaders that buy upp ... whoole loades and carry it away and so make corne at such an

¹⁵ R. Bernard, *Guide to Grand Jurymen*, p. 99; T. Ady, *A candle in the dark*, pp. 9-12; T. Beard, *Theatre of God's Judgements* (London, 1631), p. 122; J. Gaule, *Select Cases of conscience*, p. 16.

¹⁶ R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the world of spirits*, preface. Similar arguments were professed by T. Browne, *Religio Medici* (London, 1659), pp. 63-4; M. Casaubon, *A true and faithful Relation of what passed for many years between Dr John Dee and Some Spirits* (London, 1659), pp. 7, 51; G. Sinclair, *Satans invisible world discovered* (London, 1685), p. 1; B. Campfield, *A Theological Discourse of Angels and their Ministries* (London, 1678), pp. 171-2; J. Edwards, *Some thoughts concerning the severall causes and Occasions of atheism* (London, 1695), pp. 100-1.

excessive rate; although there is corn enough'.¹⁷ While historians have stressed the measures that could be taken to deal with this, such as official action by the Government or unofficial action by the local community - riots and demonstrations - belief in divine judgement on the greedy and the appeal to such feeling made by pamphleteers, should not be ignored. One account related how a Berkshire farmer had filled up his barns with grain and corn in the hope that prices would rise:

That very day did the lightning ceaze upon the barne of the aforementioned Miser, and burned up all his corne; and hee himselfe going about to get men to quench the fire was slaine by a Thunder-bolt: by which let all Misers take warning, and not delight to make a scarcity of plenty, least God shew the judgement upon them.¹⁸

Such pamphlets stressed the social unacceptability of hoarding corn and grain during times of plenty, for it was contrary to God's law and invited the threat of divine judgement and retribution.

Blasphemy and tempting fate were also seen as dangerous pursuits to engage in, as Dorothy Matley, from Derby, found out one day to her cost. She had been renowned for many years as a curser, and was often heard to swear 'I would I might sink into the earth if it be so', or 'I would God would make the earth open and swallow me up'. In March 1660, she was working outside a lead mine washing ore and was asked by one of the workers if she had taken two pennies from the breeches he had left outside the mine. She violently denied it, wishing the ground might swallow her up if she had them. Later that day a man walking with his daughter heard a cry, and saw Dorothy Matley, along with her tub and sieve, twisting round and sinking into the ground. She was after dug up and the two pennies were found on her. What may have been mining subsidence was interpreted by the author of the pamphlet as God's punishment for her sins.¹⁹

¹⁷ J. Walter & K. Wrightson, 'Dearth and the Social Order in Early Modern England', *Past and Present*, LXXI (1976), 22-42, p. 30.

¹⁸ BL, TT E 181 (17), *The Attachment Examination and Confession* (London, 1641).

¹⁹ *Two most strange Wonders* (London, 1661), cited in H. E. Rollins, ed., *The Pack of Autolyous* (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 61-2. There are numerous other mentions of this incident, which include: *A most wonderful and sad judgement of God upon one Dorothy Matley, late of Ashover, in the County of Derby* (London, 1661); *Mirabilis Annus* (London, 1661), p. 82, tells the story at length; W. Turner,

Another aspect of what was believed to be divine intervention on man's sinfulness was specifically directed at the sin of pride. This was a favourite topic for many Puritans and is illustrated by a pamphlet published in 1641: a 16 year-old girl had died, and been laid out for 20 hours. But suddenly she awoke 'as if from a slumber'. She explained that she had been in the divine presence and warned she had but 5 days to live. In addition to prophesying the end of the world, she used her experience to warn the daughter of her master of luxurious apparel, displeasing to the Almighty: 'The very cloathes which Mrs Anne did weare for her Pride, shall become loathsome to all people, whereby none shall be able to weare them, but shall become unnecessary to all men'.²⁰ This passage may possibly tell us more of the jealousy of the maid than her religious fervour, but she died 5 days later as she had predicted. For another commentator writing in 1645, the Civil War was a punishment for the sins of the whole nation:

I observe that the Lord had decreed a seperation betweene the King and his Parliament before the wars began in England for the sins of the whole nation ... It is said, that Pestilence, the Sword and Famine, are the searchers, wherewith the Lord drawes the blood of sinners.²¹

It did not matter if innocents were punished along with sinners, for God had sent the war as punishment for the sins of mankind in general.²²

Divine intervention was also invoked to explain miraculous escapes from certain death. Lessons were drawn from any revivals following capital punishment. The case of Anne Green from Oxford in 1650, who had been sentenced to death for infanticide, was perhaps the most famous of the period.²³ The pamphlet accounts are

Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences (London, 1697), pt. 1, ch. 104, p. 15; J. Worthington, *Diary*, ed. J. Crossley (London, 1847), vol. i, p. 346; J. Bunyan, *Life and Death of Mr Badman* (London, 1680), pp. 46-8. In addition the burial registers of Ashover record: '1660. Dorothy Matley, supposed wife of John Flint, of this parish, foreswore herself; whereupon the ground open, and she sanke over her hed March 1st; and being found dead she was buried March 2nd', cited in J. C. Cox, *The Parish Registers of England* (London, 1910), p. 133.

²⁰ BL, TT E 181 (18), *The wonderfull works of God. Declared by a strange Prophecie of a Maid, that lately lived neere Worsop in Nottinghamshire* (London, 1641).

²¹ BL, TT E 295 (2), *Signes and Wonders from Heavèn* (London, 1645), p. 2.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²³ The case was analysed in two pamphlets: *Newes from the Dead. Or, A true and exact narration of the miraculous deliverance of Anne Greene* (Oxford, 1651) and *A Wonder of Wonders* (Oxford, 1650).

interesting, not so much because she survived hanging, but because they demonstrate the great interest ordinary people had in such incidents. After she had been hanged her body was carried to the physicians for dissection; on examination she was found to be still breathing. She was revived over a period of three days and completely recovered within a month. Such was the popularity of this event a guard had to be placed at the door where she was recovering because of the press of people who wanted to visit her. Her case was re-investigated as a result and it was considered that she had not murdered her infant child, rather it had been still-born and was almost certainly a miscarriage. Added to this, the chief prosecutor, Sir Thomas Read, died within three days of her execution, although the author of the pamphlet does at least concede that he was an old man and such an event 'should not be too rashly commented on'.²⁴ However, in an account of the same incident by the Oxford antiquarian Anthony Wood (1632-1695), he points out that Anne Green was hanged for the murder of her bastard child 'begotten by Jeffrey Reade grand-son to Sir Thomas Read of Dunstew in Oxfordshire'.²⁵ If true, this would suggest she was being ruthlessly silenced by Sir Thomas Read in an effort to cover up his son's indiscretion.²⁶ The case demonstrates both the benevolent and malevolent nature of God's justice. The pamphlet implied it was not just the survival of the convicted felon that demonstrated there had been some sort of divine intervention: the death of Thomas Read, the person responsible for her execution, even better, the father of her seducer, was also cited as evidence.

No doubt these events were still fresh in the memory when, in 1659, a maid was hanged at Canditch, near Oxford, again for infanticide. After she was cut down and taken to the physicians it was found she was still alive. On this occasion however, the town bailiffs were obviously keen not to see a repetition of popular disorder. During

²⁴ *Newes from the Dead*, p. 7.

²⁵ A. Wood, *Wood's Life and Times*, ed. A. Clark (Oxford, 1900), vol. i, pp. 165-9.

²⁶ This would have been a relatively easy matter. Under the terms of the 1624 Infanticide Act there was a presumption of guilt against any unmarried mother found with a dead child.

the night a group of them broke into the house where she was being cared for and took her away in a coffin. They put a halter around her neck and hanged her for a second time from a tree. The contemporary account claims she was conscious throughout, for she had cried out 'Lord have mercy upon me' just before she was hanged. The following day a group of enraged women chopped down the tree. In addition, the bailiff responsible for hanging her was continually abused whenever he walked the streets in Oxford. Like the previous case, divine retribution was seen in the subsequent fate of the bailiff, for he died soon after this incident, his death being attributed to his cruelty to the woman he had hanged. Although the alleged felon in this story was not saved, there is still the implication that God had intervened to save her life and this was confirmed by the bailiff's death.²⁷

Perhaps the most popular proof of divine intervention was the monstrous birth. There is no doubt such phenomena enjoyed widespread popularity. Monsters were a prominent attraction at the Bartholomew Fair in London.²⁸ It is this popularity that has led some historians to argue that monsters were not seen as prodigies at all.²⁹ Instead the popular appeal of such sights rested solely on their novelty value. This was lamented by the author of an account reporting the birth of some Siamese twins at Plymouth in 1635.³⁰ The author attacked the use of monsters as a source of income by those who charged people to see them - a sign of the ungodliness of the age - and commented that such prodigies sent by God were now ignored by mankind.³¹

²⁷ ORO, Symond MSS, vol. ii, f. 347.

²⁸ H. Morley, *Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair* (London, 1859), p. 315.

²⁹ K. Park & L. Daston, 'Unnatural conceptions: The study of monsters in sixteenth and seventeenth century France and England', *Past and Present*, 92, August (1981), 20-54, p. 35.

³⁰ *A true and certain relation of a Strange Birth* (London, 1635), repr. C. Hindley, *The Old Book Collector's Miscellany* (London, 1872), vol. ii, pp. 9-21.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 21. Perhaps the most notorious were the Siamese twins Lazurus and John Baptiste. John Baptiste was said to have been attached to his brother at the stomach and they are known to have toured England and Scotland during the late 1630s, displaying themselves to public view for money. Vid: *The two inseperable brothers* (London, c.1639), repr. H. E. Rollins, *The Pack of Autolyclous* (Cambridge, 1927); *A certain relation of a hog-face woman* (London, 1640); R. Lawson, *Story of the Scot's Stage* (London, 1917).

Certainly it is true that viewing monstrous births had always been popular, but such births had not been well utilised by propagandists. The widespread interest shown in monstrous births would have guaranteed a ready audience for the interpretations of the clergy, many of whom had a specific point of view. To this extent accounts of such births were little different from other aspects of the supernatural. During the Civil War period and the Interregnum such accounts were shamelessly used to demonstrate the lack of godliness of the times and the likelihood of divine punishment for sinful behaviour. Indeed this is where their true strength lay. For by associating monstrous births with individual sinfulness, rather than the sinfulness of mankind as a whole, the religious élite could ensure a religious compliance at the individual level.

Some authors did not hesitate to use such accounts in order to launch their own attacks on nonconformity and ungodliness. Anabaptists came under particular attack by commentators, especially when the child was born with a deformed head. One reason for this may have been connected with the ritual of baptism, the baby's head being the part of the body anointed with the sign of the cross and if missing or deformed may have been interpreted as an indication of God's displeasure with the religious beliefs of the parents. Such an explanation was undoubtedly used in 1642 when Mary Wilmore, of Mears Ashby, Northamptonshire, was delivered of a child without a head. Before the birth of the child, the husband of Mary Wilmore had been in a quandary over the importance of baptism, and was advised to go to the nearby village of Hardwicke to see the divine there, 'Master Bannard'. His opinion was that baptism was not necessary for the salvation of the soul, but was 'an ancient, laudable, and decent ceremony of the Church of England'. When this answer was related to his wife she was supposed to have said 'I had rather my childe should be borne without a head, then to have a head to be signed with the signe of the Crosse'.³² There is no

³² BL, TT E 113 (15), *A strange and lamentable accident that happened lately at Mears Ashby in Northamptonshire* (London, 1642).

doubt that the birth was seen as a sign of God's displeasure and was used unmercifully to attack the error of her beliefs.

In a similar way, when Mary Adams of Essex gave birth to a headless child 10 years later, the event was blamed on her lack of godliness. In *The Ranters Monster* (1652), she was described as having drifted from one sect to another: first an Anabaptist, then a Familist, then a Ranter and finally professing no belief at all. Whilst in prison she had ended her own life soon after the birth by ripping open her bowels with a knife that she had been lent to pair her nails.³³ As in the account of Mary Wilmore it was probably her rejection of the ritual of baptism that sparked off such a vehement attack on her character. Thus the religious interpretation that this was a sign of divine intervention against the Anabaptist sect was particularly appealing. Suicide seems to have also been a common punishment imposed on blasphemers by God. In the same pamphlet we are told of the death of a man who failed to keep the Sabbath. Despite being warned by his wife not to work, he ignored her and set to work chopping wood. While he was doing this he cut his leg, and notwithstanding the pleadings of his apprentice, refused to go home. The apprentice went to get help, and when he returned he found the man had stabbed himself several times in his stomach.³⁴ Whether the manner of their deaths was accurately described is not really relevant. The important point is the conveying of the feeling of torment or guilt that they suffered because of their sins. The manner of their deaths suggests a disgust in the weakness of their material bodies, and conveys a sense of the supernatural, the implication being they were tempted against their will to perform these acts because of their past sins. In each case there is definitely the feeling that they had got their just deserts, because they had refused to accept the truth of the word of God.

³³ BL, TT E 658 (6) *The Ranters Monster: Being a true relation of one Mary Adams, living in Tilingham in Essex, who named herself the virgin Mary, blasphemously affirming, that she was conceived with child by the Holy Ghost* (London, 1652), pp. 4-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Other accounts of monstrous births were utilised for quite different propaganda purposes. When in 1646 the pamphlet *A declaration of a strange and Wonderfull monster* described the sinfulness of a certain Mrs Haughton, who had just given birth to a 'monstrous child without a head, ugly and deformed', which was seen as God's judgement for her blasphemy, it was also ensuring the furtherance of the

Figure 4: The Headless Monster of Mrs HAUGHTON



Source: BL, TT E 325 (20), *A declaration of a strange and Wonderfull monster* (London, 1646).

Parliamentarian cause. In addition to being described as a 'papish gentlewoman' she was said to have cursed against 'Mr Prinne, Mr Burton, Mr Bastwick', and had asserted that the King was right in fighting them. Finally, in a statement reminiscent of that made by Mary Adams three years before, she had damned herself by stating 'I pray God, that rather than I shall be a Roundhead, or bear a Roundhead, I may bring forth a Childe without a head'. The account was authenticated by Edward Fleetwood, the minister of Kirkham Parish in Lancashire. Such was his desire to prove the story

true, that he ordered the body of the child exhumed, and it was seen that it was indeed without a head. He certified to this along with a midwife and others. The certificate was then shown to the committee of the House of Commons who ordered that it be printed so that all the Kingdome 'might see the hand of God herein; to the comfort of his people, and the terrour of the wicked that deride and scorn them'.³⁵ Thus the monstrous birth, instead of being seen as a portent of some calamity to come, as such phenomena had been in the past, was instead seen as divine punishment on a blasphemer. God had directly interposed in the affairs of man and by doing so had demonstrated that He was on the side of the Parliamentary cause.

The above examples demonstrate how individual acts of sinfulness could be punished by God and served to remind others of the dangers of transgressing the accepted behaviour of the time. Other commentators saw such phenomena as punishment by God for the sins of the nation as a whole. One lamented 'Have not nature altered her course so much, that women framed of pure flesh and blood, bringeth forth ugly and deformed Monsters: and contrawise Beasts bring forth humane shapes contrary to their kinde'.³⁶ The same pamphlet describes the birth of a monstrous child to a 'Mistriss Hart' of 'Ratcliffe Highway', by a midwife, 'mistriss bullock', at the sign of the 'three arrows'. The story, although probably based on fact, used language that was obviously intended to pander to the popular appeal of such images. The name of the midwife and the street may well have been humorous, but the message was serious. In addition, the place of birth (the 'three arrows') further conjured up images that this was a prodigy sent by God. 'Thus doth the Lord daily send wonders into the world, thereby to put us in minde of our sinnes, and move us to repentance'.³⁷ The same themes could be used in popular ballads. One began

³⁵ BL, TT E 325 (20), *A declaration of a strange and Wonderfull monster* (London, 1645), pp. 5-7. This account was also published in BL, TT E 349 (1) *Five Wonders seene in England* (London, 1646), pp. 3-5, 7.

³⁶ BL, TT E 295 (2), *Signes and Wonders from Heaven*, p. 2.

³⁷ BL, TT E 295 (2), *Signes and Wonders from Heaven*, p. 5.

A monster of mishapen Forme
 I here to you present,
 By this Example you may learn
 to feare Gods Punishment.³⁸

The reader is left in no doubt that the birth is to be seen as a punishment by God for man's sins. The last verse exhorted all parents to take this as an example:

Your Children which should be a joy
 and comfort in the end,
 The Lord in fury will destroy,
 if you do him offend.³⁹

The language used in these extracts was not simply the reporting of a newsworthy item, but instead took advantage of its popularity as a subject in order to ensure an audience for what was in effect a printed sermon.

Figure 5: The Monstrous Birth at Ratcliffe Highway



Source: BL, TT E 295 (2), *Signes and Wonders from Heaven* (London, 1645).

³⁸ *Natures Wonder?* (London, 1664), repr. H. E. Rollins, *The Pack of Autolyclus* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 142.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

During this period there was a plethora of writing which described the appearance of spirits and the spirit-world to mortal man. However, it is important to differentiate between what many writers described as spirits (which could be good or evil), and ghosts. There was much confusion during the seventeenth century between these terms. A spirit could just as easily be described as an angel, the familiar of a witch or the soul of a man after death.⁴⁰ As well as this there was great debate amongst contemporaries as to what the actual substance of a ghost or spirit was. For the physician, John Cotta, mankind was made up of a mixed substance, part spiritual and part body and it was only after death that they became separated. Other beings like devils or angels were permanent spirits and had no body. Thus the devil could do no harm unless it possessed a corporeal substance like a human body or that of an animal.

The importance of the debates concerning the physical make-up of spirits was that similar arguments surrounded the composition of the body of God, and such debates in practice became debates about His very existence. During the latter part of the seventeenth century the too literal interpretation of the Bible was thought to be questioning the very existence of spirits. The basic tenet of Sadducism, as it became known, was that if God had created man in his own image then it followed God was corporeal, otherwise man would be incorporeal. Moreover, if God had made nothing that was incorporeal, then it followed that angels and devils, which were supposed to be spirits, were fables.⁴¹ In addition, such assertions were reinforced by Epicurean arguments which, combined with certain aspects of Cartesian philosophy, were used to show that God had a human body. It was held that God was happy, but to be happy he had to have virtue, and to be virtuous he must possess reason, and to have reason he must have human shape, since no other creature possessed reason.⁴² The problem

⁴⁰ J. Cotta, *The Infallible True and Assured Witch*, iv., p. 23.

⁴¹ T. Bromhall, *A Treatise of Spirits*, p. 346, summarises the main arguments and attacks the Sadduceans and Epicureans on the grounds that the Bible should not be interpreted literally. See also C. Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, p. 202, in which he argues that if angels existed then they must be corporeal.

⁴² T. Bromhall, *A Treatise of Spirits*, p. 348.

was that such logic did not accord with the arguments of personal experience. That is why Empiricists, such as Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, used the popular reports of ghosts and apparitions as evidence of the existence of spirits and of God. They could then use this to attack the arguments of the Sadduceans and accuse them of atheism. Glanvill, writing in 1648, believed that the world was surrounded by such spirits, both good and evil, and argued that a man's fortune or lack of fortune was directly attributed to the machinations of these spirits. 'I say, these and such like odde things, may with the greatest probability be resolved into the Conduct and Menages of those invisible supervisors, that preside over, and govern our affairs'.⁴³ And we still talk of our 'Guardian Angels' today.

Accounts detailing the attempts to contact these good spirits increased in popularity during the second half of the seventeenth century. Goodwin Wharton, in his autobiography, described how a friend of his had a conversation with a good angel after finding some papers in his recently deceased father's room. Intrigued by this Wharton attended a summoning of this good spirit with his friend but was frustrated to find that the spirit had 'no power in his own essence (through our impunity) to appeare to speake to any who had so farr polted themselves (to him att least I must call it so) as to have lost their virginity, whether man or woman'.⁴⁴ Finally Wharton was able to procure the services of a boy who, being a virgin, allowed communication with the spirit to take place.

Perhaps one of the most bizarre meetings between man and visions of heavenly angels was described by J. E. Howes in 1643. He described how he saw his first vision in December 1643, which he described as 'an Angell of God'. The angel asked him to give his heart to God which he agreed to do. Then the angel took up a pair of compasses and a rule and drew a triangle around the heart and a circle around the triangle and inscribed it with various words. After this

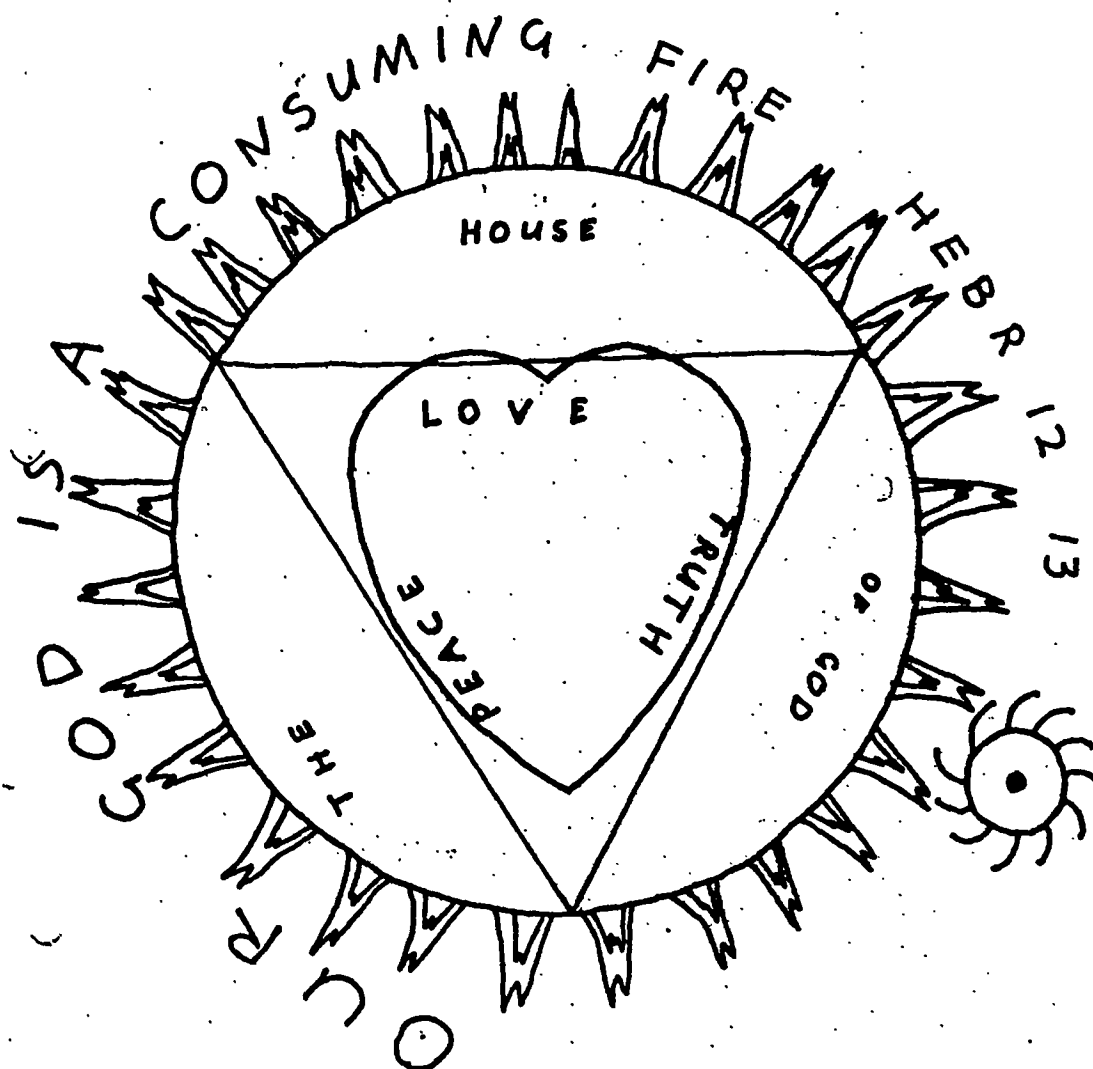
⁴³ J. Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour In the Defence of the Being of Witches and Apparitions: with some things concerning the Famous Great reks, written in a letter to the much honoured Robert Hunt, Esq.* (London, 1668), p. 55.

⁴⁴ BL Add. MSS 20,006 Autobiography of Goodwin Wharton, 1668, f. 18.

the Angell delivereth the Heart to me againe, and Comanded me to make the Pattern thereof, and that I and the Children that God would give me should wear it always about them as a Breast plate of Rightousnes and as the Testimone of the [love] betweene God & them for ever throughout all their generations.⁴⁵

As can be seen from the illustration, this charm is basically a thaumaturgic triangle with a heart in the middle. Such symbols were designed to protect whatever was within from harm, in this case the heart of the person who wore the charm was protected. Thus we have a case of what was in effect a magical charm which would normally have been held to be demonic had its use not been justified by the fact that it

Figure 6: A Charm of Protection



Source: BL, Sloane MSS 979, J. E. Howes, Commonplace Book, 1643-1647.

⁴⁵ BL Sloane MSS 979, An account of visions seen by J. E. Howes in E. Howes Commonplace Book, 1643-1647, ff. 10-11.

had been given to the wearer by God's servant.

Another form of divining that took place between man and the spirit world was the communication described by many between people and fairies. Such creatures usually appeared as tiny humans, often with magical powers. One such incident in 1645 describes how Ann Jeffries, aged nineteen, was knitting in her garden when 'there came over the Garden hedge to her six Persons of a small stature, all clothed in green, which she call'd Faeries'.⁴⁶ After this visit she gained the power to heal by touch, beginning with healing her mother's hurt leg and finally gaining such a reputation that people came for miles around to be stroked by her. Wharton's companion, Mrs Parish, also claimed to have been granted her healing power, in addition to riches and jewels, by fairies.⁴⁷ Wharton's account of his life-long association with the King and Queen of the fairies also demonstrated his belief in the power of divine intervention. In his late teens he was miraculously saved from drowning at sea and shortly after visited by God in his dreams. He later gained supernatural powers: a friend of his was close to death but recovered after he prayed for him; Wharton was challenged to a duel, but the challenger fell mortally ill soon after Wharton had prayed to God.⁴⁸ It is clear that the visions or dreams experienced by Wharton were used as evidence that God could commune with mankind.

Sometimes both angels and demons could be seen by the same person. John Pordage, like Wharton, described visits to another fantasy world, but this was not such a benign one. In fact he experienced two spiritual worlds: the '*Mundus tenebrosas*', or the dark world, and the '*Mundus uminosus*', the light world. He described the eternal conflict and struggle that took place between these two spiritual worlds. Various witnesses deposed that spirits had hovered outside the windows of his home. Pordage explained that a dragon had visited his home, but an angel of God had stood

⁴⁶ *An account of one Anne Jeffries, now living in the County of Cornwall, who was fed for six months by a small sort of Airy People call's Faeries* (London, 1696), p. 10.

⁴⁷ BL Add. MSS 2,006, f. 53.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 3.

by him and defended him from the dreadful apparition. He related how about 4 years before the investigation, he had seen apparitions of good and bad angels for three weeks at his house. In the 'dark world' he saw 'multitudes of evil spirits or angels, presenting themselves in appearing distinctions of order and dignity, as powers, principalities, dignities'. He described the hierarchy and noxious smells. In the 'light world' he saw angels of light who were luminous and transparent. He heard musical sounds and voices. The smell was of heavenly perfumes. Apparently he was exercised inwardly for three weeks by these two worlds. As a result he reached a sort of enlightenment. He was later tried for blasphemy, necromancy and witchcraft by the commissioners for Berkshire in 1654.⁴⁹

The Pordage case illustrates the ease with which such visionaries could run the risk of being accused of heresy. The problem for many who claimed to have had contact with angels, fairies or good spirits, was that the authorities then attacked them on the grounds of consorting with the devil. The healing skills granted by the fairies to Ann Jeffries, for example, resulted in her receiving enough local notoriety that she received a visit from the neighbouring magistrates and ministers:

The Ministers endeavored to persuade her they were evil Spirits that resorted to her, and that it was the Delusion of the Devil, (but how could that be, when she did no hurt, but Good to all that came to her for Cure of their Distempers? and advised her not to go to them when they call'd her.⁵⁰

Similarly Goodwin Wharton's friend was forced to leave Paris after it had become known that he had summoned a good angel: 'som of the protestant divines of Charenton (neare Paris) of which communion he was; coming to him positively affirmed it was the divell, and without he would renounce it, threatened they would excommunicate him'.⁵¹ Although many ministers and magistrates were able to conceive that some men or women were able to make compacts with the devil and be possessed by evil spirits, they viewed possession by a good spirit or contact with such

⁴⁹ J. Pordage, *Innocence appearing through the dark Mists of Pretended Guilt*, pp. 73-77.

⁵⁰ *An account of one Anne Jeffries*, p. 19.

⁵¹ BL Add. MSS 2,006, f. 18.

a spirit as mere delusion. Instead it was thought such cases were deceptions on the part of the devil.

One of the most frequent means by which divine communication took place with mortal man was through dreams. Much of this of course had biblical foundations.⁵² When Goodwin Wharton set out on paper the dreams that he had experienced, although he was unable to offer any interpretation of them, he was convinced they came from God. He explained that it appeared to him 'to be a more particular influence of t[he] spiritt of God upon me', which he described as assisting and strengthening him in his prayers.⁵³

Like so many other aspects of supernatural belief, dreams could also be used politically for propaganda purposes. This was because the author of the tract could exonerate himself from any association from the text by claiming they were not his thoughts, but were the visions he had seen in a dream. The humorous pamphlet entitled *Archy's Dream* (published 1641) contained a damning attack on Archbishop Laud. The pamphlet described the dream experienced by Archy, the exiled court jester to the king. Laud is seen as a 'spirit come out of purgatory', having descended from Heaven into Hell. The dreamer sees 'blind Bonner and Wolsey dancing a galliard, whipt forward by a company of hellish hags'. Behind was a group of men making chairs, which were filled as soon as they were completed. One was kept by, the dreamer being told this was for Laud. When the dreamer awoke he heard from a noble that the day before Laud had been taken to the Tower.⁵⁴ Of course such a tract could not have appeared as anything else but as a prophecy. In addition, the fact that it is a court jester who received the vision is symptomatic of the reversal of fortune: the fool becomes wise and the powerful falls.⁵⁵

⁵² *Gen.* 41:12; *Dan.* 2:1, 2, 12; *Joel* 2:28; *Acts* 2:17.

⁵³ BL Add. MSS 2,006, ff. 13-14.

⁵⁴ *Archy's Dream, sometimes Jester to his Majestie: but exiled the Court by Canterburies malice* (London, 1641), repr. E. W. Ashbee, *Occasional Fac-simile reprints* (London, 1868).

⁵⁵ Similar imagery of the turning of the wheel of fortune was described in the play *A new play called Canturburie his change of diet*. In this the King's jester ridicules the Archbishop and a Jesuit who are locked in a bird cage. Again the author uses the fool to laugh at the Archbishop and to ask 'who is the

As well as the interpretation of dreams, great store was placed by people during the 1640s in interpreting reports of ghosts and spectres. The belief that dead men walk the earth as ghosts has been universal since ancient times. However, dominant religious ideologies have often explained and dealt with such beliefs differently. Before the Reformation the Catholic church had used the belief in ghosts to its own ends, explaining that they were the souls of those in purgatory, who could not rest until they had atoned for their sins, and that they were sent by God to roam the world of the living. However, the Reformation rejected this idea of purgatory on earth, instead arguing that all souls went straight to heaven or hell. The problem was that ghosts were still reported to have been seen and so it was necessary to explain why this was so. One explanation may lie in the changes that took place in the way the dead were treated.

There had always been great superstition surrounding the burying of the dead. However, with the coming of the Reformation, much of the symbolism and ritual, which had previously been instrumental in the process of burial and had satisfied the mourners need to ensure that the spirit would rest in peace, became redundant. Shorter, simpler last rites and less widespread reliance on sacramental help restricted the scope for clerical influence over the dying. Moreover, throughout the seventeenth century the importance of funeral rites gradually gave way to the funeral sermon. Indeed such was the change in the English way of death during this period that it has prompted one historian to describe this process as 'one of the great unchartable revolutions in English history'.⁵⁶ The problem was that these rituals had comforted the survivors and when removed there was nothing to take their place except the sermon of a divine. As a result there was little left apart from the actual burial of the corpse that guaranteed the soul would rest in peace. The belief that a soul could not rest if the corpse was not buried was not unique to the seventeenth century but was

fool now'. *A new play called Canturburie his change of diet. Which showeth variety of wit and mirth: privately acted neere the Palace-yard at Westminster* (London, 1641).

⁵⁶ R. Houlbrooke, ed., *Death, Ritual and Bereavement* (London, 1989), p. 36.

commented on in the following century as reaching back to antiquity. Dom Augustin Calmet had pointed out in 1759 that it had been the opinion of

ancient heathens, that departed souls are not admitted to a state of rest, till their bodies are buried ... The Sybil in Virgil, when shewing Aeneas the manes wandering up and down upon the banks of the Acheron, tells him that they are the souls of such as have not been buried.⁵⁷

It seems that greater stress may have been placed on the physical act of laying the body to rest than any recourse to complicated ceremonies. The problem was this could not always be achieved. In battle corpses often went unburied, nor had they received any form of religious unction. In these circumstances might not the dead rise and return to haunt the living? Ghosts were sighted at Edgehill after the battle in 1642. An army of dead was seen to march through the nearby village of Keinton to the sound of drums and battle. Such was the fear of the local villagers that many women miscarried, and 'the stoutest hearted man amongst them all could not denye but that he feared death'. The following night the local Justice of the Peace along with other villagers attended and the ghostly scene was repeated:

Drumes and Trumpets gave againe to sound alarum to fight and all the spirit horse and foot appeared and stood in battleray, the foot againe the foot and horse against the horse discharging of M. petterrell and Carbines the one against the other, falling to the ground on either side apace, and Ordinance playing one against the other as plainly visable to the behoulders view as if the reall action had bin there.

The lack of proper burial for the soldiers was offered at the time as an explanation: 'some learned men have since delivered their opinions, that there may be yet unburied Kackasses found, so dilligent search hath bin made, and found it so'.⁵⁸

As previously discussed, during the English Civil War period and later numerous accounts of apparitions and spirits required explanation, and this was - or could be - a source of difficulty for the godly.⁵⁹ They could not stop people from fearing such apparitions, so they were explained as coming from God as punishment

⁵⁷ D. A. Calmet, *Dissertations upon Apparitions of Angels*, p. 55.

⁵⁸ BL, TT E 86 (23), *The New Yeares Wonder. Being a most certaine and true Relation of the disturbed inhabitants of Kenton, And other neighbouring villages neere unto Edgehil, where the battaile betweixt the Kings army, and the Parliaments forces was fought* (London, 1642), p. 7.

⁵⁹ See above, pp. 77-9.

for their sinfulness. The ghost army seen at Edgehill can also be interpreted in this way. The pamphlet describing the event implied that the ghosts were sent by God as prodigies, and began with a comment on the sorry state of the Kingdom and the effect the Civil War was having on the perceptions of other nations, who had previously held England up as the champion of Christendom. 'And now to see the change times heere hath made, and with it made us a laughter to the world to see ourselves divided against ourselves, doing ourselves that ill, which forain nations would but not doe'.⁶⁰

The belief that ghosts may not have been spirits in torment at all but prodigies sent by God is further reinforced by the fact that it was not always necessary for apparitions or ghosts to represent someone who was dead. Sometimes a living person underwent an out-of-body experience and appeared many miles away as an apparition. Such an account was related to Richard Baxter in a letter from Thomas Tilton, a minister of Aylesworth in Kent, which he published in his *Certainty of the World of Spirits* in 1691. In it he related how Mary Goffe, of Rochester, Kent, the day before her death had a great desire to see her children who were some distance away. However, she was too ill to travel, though later she seems to have gone into a trance. The next day she told the spectators that she had been at home with her children. Meanwhile, the nurse at Rochester confirmed she had seen the likeness of Mary Goffe come out of the chamber where the children lay.⁶¹ The final paragraph of this letter made it clear that it was to be used to convince atheists of the error of their ways: God had directly intervened in order to make it possible for the mother to see her children one last time before she died.

One of the most frequent aspects of ghost sightings was the abject terror that befell the viewer. Often this was such that he or she was transfixed with fear. This meant one was unable to investigate the cause of a suspicious sound and so discover perhaps a perfectly innocent explanation. Many may not have wanted to find a rational explanation because they genuinely believed in the supernatural and were thus

⁶⁰ BL, TT E 86 (23), *The New Yeares Wonder*, p. 4.

⁶¹ R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the World of Spirits*, p. 151.

too scared to confront whatever sound or vision their imagination had converted into a ghost. When Samuel Pepys was staying at Sir William Batten's house, he was told by Sir William that his 'predecessor, did die and walk in my chamber' which made Pepys 'somewhat affeared'. During the night he awoke about 3 am and 'by the light of the moon I saw my pillow (which overnight I flung from me) stand upright, but not be thinking myself what it might be, I was a little afeared'.⁶² On 29 November 1667 Pepys described some noises he heard during the night which he thought was a thief, but turned out to be his neighbour's chimney being cleaned out. He later mulled over this incident in his diary:

It is one of the most extraordinary accidents in my life, and gives ground to think of Don Quixot's adventures how people may be surprized - and the more from an accident last night, that our young gibb-cat did leap down our stairs from top to bottom at two leaps and frightened us, that we could not tell well whether it was the cat or a spirit, and do sometimes think this morning that the house be haunted.⁶³

In a later entry Pepys describes an after-dinner conversation whilst travelling between Dartford and Chatham by coach with Commissioner Middleton, Captain Tinker and Mr Hutchinson. 'After supper we fell to talk of spirits and apparitions, whereupon many pretty perticular stories were told, so as to make me almost afeared to lie alone, but for shame I could not help it'.⁶⁴ There is no doubt that the fear of the supernatural afflicted many even when the explanation to the modern reader may be perfectly rational. How was it that a ghost or spirit which most writers at the time believed was ethereal could lift up objects, speak, make noises, or even strike someone? Certainly one of the most common features of seventeenth-century ghost sightings was that the ghost often moved or lifted objects despite being reported as being able to travel ethereally through objects. Other ghosts proved to be composed of purely physical material. When Henry Lovel described the apparition he saw in Ireland, he said that he was manhandled and struck with a boot over the knees. His attacker was 'no bigger than an Ape ... I looked towards the doore, and there I saw the shape of a man,

⁶² S. Pepys, *The Shorter Pepys*, ed. R. Latham (London, 1987), p. 126.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 851.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1,000-1,002.

and he pissed on my face'.⁶⁵ Then the so-called ghost was forced to open the bedroom window in order to leave. Often ghosts could appear with inanimate objects, such as cannon, or creatures generally believed to be without souls, such as horses. In the case of the ghostly army seen after the battle of Edgehill they were not only seen but also heard. One apparition seen in a lumber yard near Golden Cross in London included all these elements. The apparition had been appearing for about a month during the early hours of the morning and was able to speak to a divine who had come to view it. The spirit answered him

with such a horrid and dismal noise that the Divine was not able to understand what the Apparition said unto him ... the standers by and those who were present with the Divine were likewise much amazed, in so much that they knew not where they were, their hair standing upright on their heads, which made them (and not without good cause) to wish themselves further off.⁶⁶

Typically many ghosts were often either a relative or a close friend of the viewer. In November 1674, Thomas Goddard of Malborough met the apparition of his father-in-law, one Edward Avon; Captain William Dyke, of Skilgate, Somerset, saw an apparition of his old Civil War commander Major George Sydenham; in 1661 Mr Watkinson's ghost appeared to his daughter Toppam; in 1678 the ghost of the daughter of Dr Farrar appeared to him soon after her death.⁶⁷ Often the ghost appeared in order to give the living a specific message. In the case of the Edward Avon ghost guilt and compassion seem to have been the primary motivation. The apparition held out his hand to the viewer and gave him 'twenty or thirty shillings in silver', with instructions to give this to his daughter Sarah, 'for I shut up my Bowels of compassion toward her in the time of my life'. A possible explanation could be that Goddard was able to give some money to his sister and claim it came from her father, thus excusing himself from being accused of patronising her. The Avon ghost also used the opportunity to tell his son that he owed some money to another person

⁶⁵ BL, TT E 78 (1), J. Lovell, *Horrid and Strange News from Ireland*.

⁶⁶ BL, TT E 385 (7), *Fearful Apparitions or the Strangest visions that ever hath been heard* (London, 1647).

⁶⁷ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 209, 228, 230.

and asked him to settle the debt. In addition, the ghost confessed to a murder: 'In this place lyes buried the Body of him which I murdered in the year 1635 ... I took money from the Man, and he contended with me, and so I murdered him'.⁶⁸

The belief that a murder victim could not rest until his murderer had been brought to trial was a common one. In 1632 at Chester, a miller, James Graham, came down from his mill late at night and saw the apparition of a woman standing in the middle of the floor with 5 large wounds to her head. She spoke to him and said she was the spirit of the woman who had lived with one Walker, a yeoman. She had a child by him and was sent away one night with another man, who upon the moor slew her with a pick and then threw her body down a coal pit hiding the pick under a bank. The miller was told to reveal this crime or she would haunt him. Notwithstanding this he failed to do so and the apparition appeared on future occasions to repeat the request. Finally, he went to a JP and a search was made in the coal pit where the body was found with the 5 wounds as described together with the pick. At Durham assizes Walker and Sharp, the other men involved, were both convicted and executed, despite denying their guilt.⁶⁹

It was also thought that there existed a supernatural link between a murderer and his victim. The idea that a corpse would bleed in the presence of its murderer was well known. At Hertford Assizes in 1628-9, testimony was taken by Sir John Maynard, the Sergeant at Law, from the Minister of the parish where a murder had taken place. The body was taken out of the grave 30 days after death and placed on the grass before the 4 defendants. Each of them touched the dead body, whereupon the forehead of the body

began to have a dew, or gentle sweat, arise on it, which encreased by degrees, till the sweat ran down in drops on the face; the brow turn'd to a lively and fresh colour; and the deceased opened one of her Eyes, and shut it again three several times: she likewise thrust out the Ring of Marriage finger three times, and pulled it in again, and the Finger dropt blood on the Grass.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 212-214.

⁶⁹ G. Sinclair, *Satans invisible World discovered*, pp. 19-21.

⁷⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine* (Sept., 1731), p. 71.

Surprisingly, even the sceptic John Webster believed that this could occur. He based his arguments on rational grounds. Upon death the soul left the body, but not immediately. If the suspected murderer was brought to the corpse soon after the death, then the soul would still be in the vicinity and make the corpse bleed.⁷¹

Sometimes the ghost of the person murdered would haunt the murderer. This type of ghost was often portrayed in sixteenth and seventeenth-century drama. Apart from the more well known ghost appearances in Shakespeare's plays, such as *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, ghost figures that participated most fully in the body of the action were Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, Chapman's *Burly and Revenge of Burly*, Tourneur's *Atheist's Tragedy*, Peel's *Old Wives Tale* and *Lochrine*, the anonymous *Second Maiden's Tragedy*, and *The Tragedie of Caesar's Revenge*. Ghosts appeared more fleetingly and less actively in Marston's *Soponisla*, Webster's *The White Devil*, Greene's *Alphonsus*, Heywood's *Iron Age*, Middleton's *Changeling*, Ford's *the Witch of Edmonton*, Massinger's *Unnatural Combat* and *Roman Actor*.⁷² In most of these cases the ghost was generally only seen by the murderer and was purely spectral or ethereal, unable to take any physical action, representing the fevered imagination of a guilty mind. The use of the ghost in drama was particularly popular because it could be used as a window into the guilty conscience of the murderer. Perhaps Goddard, for example, had always known that his father-in-law had murdered somebody but was waiting until after his death to tell the world. The appearance of a ghost to do this would exonerate him from any complicity in the crime and explain why he had not informed the authorities of this matter earlier.

In other cases the ghost could appear as a result of a prearranged bargain. To this extent such accounts were portrayed as proofs that there existed an afterlife. This was the case with the appearance of the ghost of Major Syndenham, who appeared to Captain Dyke. They had agreed that whoever died first would return three nights later

⁷¹ J. Webster, *Displaying of supposed witchcraft*, p. 533.

⁷² Cited in R. Hunter, *The Invisible World, A study of pneumatology in Elizabethan drama* (Athens, 1939), p. 169.

to tell the other if there was an afterlife. However, after Sydenham's death he did not appear until 6 weeks later and when he did it was to give a warning: 'I could not come at the time appointed, but I am now come to tell you, That there is a God and very just and terrible one, and if you do not turn over a new leaf you will find it so'.⁷³ The implication here was that the ghost had no power to appear when he wanted, but had been sent by God to point out the error of his friend's ways. In this sense the ghost was not appearing as a tormented soul, as in the previous examples, but as a prodigy sent by God. Another example of a bargain made before death occurred in 1661 between Mr Watkinson, of Smithfield, and his daughter. He told her that 'if he should dye, if ever God did permit the dead to see the living, he would see her again'. About 6 months after his death, he appeared at the bedside of his daughter and said: 'Mal did not I tell thee that I would see thee once again?' Likewise, the same was promised in 1678 between the King's physician, Dr Farrar, and his daughter: 'this Gentleman and his Daughter ... made a compact at his intreaty that the first of them that died, if happy, should after death appear to the survivor, if it were possible'. Some time later she died after being given a noxious potion by mistake. That same night an apparition appeared to her father.⁷⁴ Such prearranged compacts are probably the closest one can get to finding evidence that the bereaved attempted to contact their loved ones at seances. One ballad on the deliberate summoning of a ghost might well be thought as just such an attempt. In it the ghost of a Mr Powel, a baker of Barkingside, appeared to the summoners after they had made a circle and burnt candles and juniper wood. This ghost was particularly unusual because it could change shape.⁷⁵

Perhaps one of the most noble of the reasons for the appearance of a ghost was so it could right a wrong, or appear in order that justice could be done. This was often for the benefit of the down-trodden or those who were unable to represent themselves.

⁷³ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 223.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 223-230.

⁷⁵ *Here is a true and perfect Relation from the Faulcon at the Barkeside; of the strange apparition of Mr Powel* (London, 1661), cited in H. E. Rollins, *The Pack of Autolyclous* (Cambridge, 1927), p. 89. This incident is also mentioned in *Mercurius Democritus*, Feb., 8-15, 1654.

The recovery of land to the rightful owner or heir was a regular theme. In one case, which appeared in a letter from Dr Ezekias to Dr H. More (unfortunately undated), an inhabitant of Guildford was in possession of some copyhold land which was to pass to his children, or in default to his brother. He died without children and so the land passed to his brother. However, his widow later discovered she was pregnant and thus claimed the land on behalf of her unborn child. The brother accused her of being a whore and procuring the child after the death of her husband. Later, as his brother was returning home from his field, the dead husband appeared to him at the stile leading from the field, and persuaded him to give the land to his child as it was his by right.⁷⁶ Again, like the earlier example of the Edward Avon ghost, this tells us much about the possible guilt feeling that may have been experienced by the brother. The appearance of a ghost allowed him to back down from the argument with honour, as he could claim that the decision had been divinely made and he had not been forced into it by an irate widow.

Another example of a ghost being used to settle a property dispute occurs with the appearance of the ghost of Mrs Bretton, of Pembridge, Hereford, in the early 1660s. She appeared to her maid, took her to a large field and said: 'observe how much of this Field I measure with my Feet. And when she had taken a good large and leisurely compass, she said, all this belongs to the Poor, it being gotten from them by wrongful means'. The ghost then told the maid to go to her brother and tell him to return it to them. She also told her a secret so her brother might know it was she and not some impostor. After the maid had told Mrs Bretton's brother about this he gave the land back.⁷⁷

Perhaps the most extraordinary contradiction in definition occurred in the haunting of houses. As pointed out earlier, many believed that ghosts were ethereal and therefore unable to cause any physical harm. However, this appears not to have been the case when a house was haunted, as opposed to a particular person being

⁷⁶ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 263.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

haunted by a ghost. Haunted houses were also exceptional because such cases could be caused by witchcraft. In other words some outside agent was made responsible for summoning the ghost in order to haunt a particular area. This may have been because, unlike the appearance of ghosts to mortal man, the haunting of houses seems to have been associated with poltergeists - a phenomenon which had always been associated with evil. In such cases it was not usual for the viewer to see the ghost of a close friend or relative, rather the haunting consisted of a poltergeist-like activity with various objects being thrown around the house and noises heard during the night. Only very rarely was any apparition seen. One such case occurred in the house of Paul Fox in West Ham in 1645. The haunting consisted of stones, brickbats, oyster shells, bread and various other objects being thrown from an upstairs room, although it was known that nobody was occupying that room. One guest described, after viewing this phenomenon from the street, how he resolved to go inside the house to investigate: 'the keen desire of discovering the cheat, made him adventure himself alone into that room'. He found the room in great disorder but nobody was there. He decided to stay for a while. As he waited a bedstead began to move and turn around. He then went to examine it to see if he could see any 'small string or hair were tyed to it, or whether there were any hole or button to fasten any such string to, or any hole or string in the Ceiling above; but after search, he found not the least suspicion of any such thing'. As he bid a hasty retreat down the stairs he was followed by a 'clatter of chairs and stools, and candlesticks, and Bedstaves'. He saw the landlady and privately acknowledged that she was not some superstitious old hysteric. As he spoke to her downstairs he saw a pipe rise from a side table and fly to the other side of the room. This confirmed that

it was neither the tricks of Waggs, nor the fancy of a Woman, but the mad frolics of Witches and Daemons. Which they of the house being fully persuaded of, roasted a Bedstaff, upon which an Old Woman a suspected Witch came to the House, and was apprehended, but escaped the Law. But the house was after so ill haunted in all the Rooms, upper and lower, that the house stood empty for a long time after.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 255-257; see also BL, TT E 301 (12), *Strange and Fearful Newes from Plaisto* (London, 1645).

Another instance of a house being haunted by an act of witchcraft was related in a letter of Mr G. Clark to 'M. T.', touching a haunted house in Welton near Daventry, in May 1658. A young girl, aged 10, over a period of three days vomited three gallons of water, then stones and coals. A Bible was laid on the bed, but each time this was done it was thrown off again. Soon other objects were being transposed from room to room. In the buttery the milk would be taken from the table and found on the floor; the beer was found to be mingled with sand and all spoiled; the salt was mingled with Bran.

At last some that had been long suspected for Witches were Examined, and one sent to the Gaol, where it is said she plays her pranks, but that is of doubtful credit. I asked the Old Woman whether they were free now. She said that one Night since, they heard great knockings and cruel noise, which scared them worse than all the rest, and once or twice that weeke her cheese was crumbled into pieces and spoiled.⁷⁹

Other poltergeist activity usually involved the throwing of stones or lifting of objects. An example of the movement of a heavy object by an invisible force was reported from Malmesbury, Wiltshire, in 1658, in the home of Hugh Bartholomew, a brewer. After a threat from a witch, a great money chest was lifted up. Apparently the nails 'were drawn, but no money was taken'.⁸⁰

Perhaps one of the most notorious cases of a haunting by an act of witchcraft was the account of the Daemon Drummer of Tidworth. This was related to Joseph Glanvill by Mr John Mompesson of Tidworth, about the middle of March 1661. He had heard a drum beat in the neighbouring town of Ludgershall and enquired of the bailiff what this was. He was told that for some time the town was bothered by a vagrant drummer who demanded money. The drummer was sent for and claimed he had authority and a signed warrant from Sir William Lawly and Colonel Ayliff of Gretenham. However Mr Mompesson knew the writing of these gentlemen and realising that the warrant was counterfeit, had the drummer arrested. The drum was sent to Mr Mompesson's house in April of that year. After this, his house was

⁷⁹ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 265-267.

⁸⁰ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 102 (1832), part 1, May, 405-410, p. 408.

plagued by knocking and banging noises. By November, chairs, shoes and bedstaves were being flung around the house for no apparent reason. In December the

Figure 7: The Demon Drummer of Tidworth



Source: J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681).

drumming was less frequent but now they heard the jingling of coins. It was felt this was because the 'Mother had spoken the day before to a neighbour, who talkt of Fayries leaving Money, viz. That she would like it well, if it would leave them some to make amends for their trouble'. By Christmas his children were being struck by objects. In January Glanvill came to visit Mompesson and found the stories to be true. He heard scratching noises under the beds of the children, beds were lifted, windows were shaken, knocking noises were heard and mysterious lights were seen in the house. Meanwhile the drummer was tried at the assizes at Salisbury and committed to Gloucester gaol for theft. He was visited by Glanvill and asked about the haunting in Tidworth and admitted to being responsible: 'I have plagued him ... and he shall never be at quiet, till he hath made me satisfaction for taking away my Drum'.⁸¹ This story received wide circulation and seemed to have been a favourite topic for after-dinner conversation. On 15 June 1663, when Pepys was at Trinity House with Lord Sandwich and Craven, his cousin Roger Pepys and Sir William Wheeler, he narrated how after dinner

we had great discourses of the nature and power of Spirits and whether they can animate dead bodies; in al which, as of the general appearing

⁸¹ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 93-108.

of spirits, my Lord Sandwich is very scepticall. He says the greatest warrants that ever he had to believe any, is the present appearing of the Devil in Wiltshire, much of late talked of, who beats a drum up and down; there is books of it, and they say very true. But my Lord observes that though he doth answer to any tune that you will play to him upon another drum, yet one tune he tried to play and could not; which makes him suspect the whole, and I think it is a good argument.⁸²

Pepys' scepticism was in a way symptomatic of the increasing scepticism that was beginning to creep into English society after the Restoration. This would support the view of those historians who have argued that during the 1650s the growing scepticism amongst the intelligentsia towards witchcraft was attributed at the time to nascent irreligion among the 'looser gentry'. It has been pointed out by Michael Hunter that the proliferation of sects during the Interregnum was frequently blamed for weakening the religious consensus and encouraging scepticism.⁸³ The increased portrayal of prodigies sent by God to punish nonconformist sects would further indicate that this was so. The unfortunate fate of Mary Adams,⁸⁴ who had drifted from being an Anabaptist, Familist, Ranter and then finally to unbelief, also supports the assertion that it was believed that sectarianism led to atheism, as it demonstrated that people experimented with extremist groups before finally becoming unbelievers.

Of equal influence to the movement towards scepticism was the use of empirical and rational arguments when debating the existence of spirits. Pepys was still as superstitious as he had always been, but could nevertheless be swayed by the rational argument of his dinner guests concerning the Drummer of Tidworth. It was through this appeal to the rational mind that many writers were able to attack the whole idea of superstitious belief. However, this was a two-edged sword, as a similar approach could be taken by those who wished to attack Sadducism. Many defended the

⁸² S. Pepys, *The Shorter Pepys*, p. 287. Other sources that contain contemporary comments on this story were S. Butler, who laughed at the 'Tedworth Demon' in *Hudibras*, (II, i, 131f.). J. Webster, in his *Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, p. 11, said 'I am sure his story of the Drummer, and his other of Witchcraft are as odd and silly, as any can be told or read, and are as fatilous, incredible, ludicrous, and ridiculous as any can be'. These were also the sentiments of Addison in his comedy *The Drummer*, (1716), which used the story as its chief source.

⁸³ M. Hunter, *Science and society in Restoration England* (London, 1981), p. 167.

⁸⁴ See above, p. 86.

existence of spirits on empirical grounds, arguing that spirits had to exist because so many people had seen them. It was pointed out that often ghosts or apparitions were seen not just by a small group but sometimes by many hundreds of people, often totally independently. One example of this was the apparition seen in August 1642, at Suffolk. A noise like a drum was heard by many hundreds of people and also a peal of muskets. This continued for the space of an hour and a half. After this a stone of about 4 lbs. in weight was seen to fall from the sky.⁸⁵ On 21 May 1646 in Newmarket three-men were seen in the sky fighting, near Thetford a pillar was seen to ascend from the earth which formed itself into a steeple, at Sopham (Cambridge) a 'ball of wild fire' fell to the earth, at Camberton a steeple was seen in the sky, at Brandon (Norfolk) a steeple and also a fleet of ships and at Marshland the sound of drums and muskets was heard, all during a violent thunderstorm.⁸⁶ Such examples were quoted continually by those who wished to show that apparitions were not simply the wild imaginings of a few deluded people.⁸⁷

In addition to empirical evidence being used to prove the existence of spirits, the absurdity of atheism was attacked on simple grounds of logic. Henry More argued that if somebody had a need to deny the existence of something, then it followed this was evidence that they had a belief in the first place. Moreover he went further by saying that often natural phenomena might result in religious devotion. The old adage - 'no atheists in the fox-holes' - would seem to apply here. A sailor caught in a violent storm

is not afraid of the darting down of *Thunder* and *Lightning* from Heaven. But this fear, that one should be struck rather than the rest, or at this time rather than another time, because a man has done thus or thus, is a naturall acknowledgement that these things are guided and directed from some discerning principle, which is all one as to confesse that *there is a God*.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ BL, TT E 111 (2), *A sign from Heaven* (London, 1642).

⁸⁶ BL, TT E 340 (33), *Severall Apparitions seen in the Ayre, at the Hague in Holland, upon the 21 day of May last past 1646, about one of the clocke in the Afternoone* (London, 1646).

⁸⁷ H. More, *An Antidote against Atheisme*, pp. 269, 270, who launched an all out attack against those who thought that apparitions seen in the sky were nothing more than imagination.

⁸⁸ H. More, *An Antidote against Atheisme*, pp. 9, 45.

In an attempt to counter the arguments by the Sadduceans that spirits could not exist, the idea that life could only exist on the surface of the planet was also challenged. Spirits, being creatures of the air and incorporeal could exist above us, just as man could exist on the surface of the planet. Why, asked Joseph Glanvill in 1681, 'should they not believe that the *Aire* and all the *Regions* above us, may have their invisible *intellectual Agents*, of nature like unto our Souls'. Life could exist anywhere, 'since we see there is nothing so contemptable and vile in the world we reside in, but hath its living Creature that dwell upon it'.⁸⁹ Indeed one writer had claimed that there could even be life on the moon, although it must be stated with rather dubious logic! Mountains and hills had been put on the Earth for the benefit of mankind. This was proven by the Bible and experience. Thus if it could be shown that the Moon had mountains and hills, then this would prove that life existed there, because God must have created those mountains and hills for that purpose. He argued that the irregularities on the surface of the Moon, as seen by the naked eye, were the shadows cast by mountains. 'Certainly then these mountains were not produced in vaine; and what more probable meaning can we conceive there should be than to make that place convenient for habitation'.⁹⁰ The author also came to terms with the insignificance of the Earth when compared to the rest of God's creation. For him, when the Bible said God created one world with life on it, the whole universe was the 'world', and thus life could exist anywhere:

This whole globe of earth and water, though it seeme to us to bee of a large extent, yet it beares not so great a proportion unto the whole frame of nature, as a small sand doth unto it; and what can such little creatures as we, discern, who are tied to this point of earth? or what can they in the Moone know of us? ... So that 'twere a very needless thing for us to search after any particulars; however, we may guesse in the generall that there are some inhabitants in that Planet; for why else did providence furnish that place with all such conveniences of habitation as have beene above declared?⁹¹

⁸⁹ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 7-8.

⁹⁰ J. Wilkins, *The Discovery of a New World* (London, 1640), p. 136.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Thus the idea that life could exist in environments that were felt to be hostile to life seems to have been accepted, and such arguments were used to defend the idea that spirits, apparitions and ghosts existed in the air around people.

As we have seen, at the same time as the defence of the existence of spirits on rational grounds, it was also argued by many that spirits and apparitions were no longer the product of the Devil's deception of the senses of man, but visible signs of either God's displeasure or of his benevolence. The problem had essentially been caused by Protestantism which allowed no miracle belief, however many people must have felt that this was a void that needed to be filled and thus belief in the power of miracles continued. This was typified by not only an increase in reported sightings of ghosts, apparitions, portents, monstrous births, but also in the increase in reports of miraculous healing and the growing popularity of unofficial healers.

Thus the concept of what was and what was not viewed as superstition had come full circle. From pre-Reformation times the church actively encouraged such beliefs by ensuring its ceremonies mirrored as closely as possible those pagan ceremonies that had existed before Christianity. In post-Reformation times all this was challenged. Often belief in ghosts and portents was viewed with suspicion because it was linked with the superstitions of pre-Reformation times. However, people still clung to their old superstitious beliefs. During the Civil War such beliefs were often acknowledged by the godly because they could be used to popularise their cause and demonstrate lack of godliness in others. Moreover, the scientific debates taking place between 1650 and 1670, concerning the existence of spirits, portents and prodigies meant that increasingly belief in God was being undermined. Many felt that it was necessary to continue supporting such beliefs in order to prevent the greater evil of atheism.

CHAPTER 4

Healing, Cunning-Folk and Witchcraft

Of all the various manifestations of what today would be called magical or superstitious beliefs, perhaps the most popular were those dealing with the healing of the sick. A whole host of unauthorised healers plied their trade in seventeenth-century England, ranging from quacks, charmers, cunning-folk and white witches to bone-setters and surgeons. The recourse of many ordinary people to cunning-folk and white witches in order to seek remedies for their ailments put many such practitioners in conflict with official physicians, still operating on mainly Galenic principles, and the church authorities. This was partly because they represented direct competition to official physicians and also because they employed remedies which were either felt to be papist or demonic and thus not in keeping with the dominant religious ideology prevalent during the seventeenth century. In this chapter it is intended to examine some aspects of seventeenth-century healing, together with the methods used, and also to make a detailed analysis of the role of cunning-folk and to examine how they were treated by the authorities. Many accused of witchcraft were not simply malevolent old crones, disliked and rejected by their community. Rather, they were often popular figures, providing useful services to their community, such as healing the sick and finding lost property.

Since much of the work of cunning folk revolved around the healing of the sick, it is also important to look at the writings of other unofficial healers, many of whom occupied the middle ground of medicine, operating between the officially recognised physician and the unofficial cunning man or cunning woman. Such works were epitomised by the publication of popular surgical treatises by surgeons such as Ambrose Paré and Albertus Otto Faber.¹ In addition herbalists and astrologers such as

¹ A. Paré, *The Method of Curing Wounds made by Gun-Shot. Also by Arrows and Darts, with their Accidents* (London, 1617); A. O. Faber, *A relation of some notable cures accounted incurable, as followeth* (London, 1663), pp. 1-2, in which he attacks the hostility of doctors and physicians to his trade.

Nicholas Culpepper, William Lilly and George Wharton, while keen to disassociate themselves from the increasingly ostracised talents of cunning folk also sought to undermine the professional physicians.² Although these men enjoyed a popularity that at first sight might seem to put them in conflict with both the church and official practitioners, it is important to understand from the outset that many of the remedies propounded by them were based not on magical or demonic grounds but on (for them at least) sound rational scientific argument. While to the modern reader the more metaphysical arguments of these healers might seem to be one step removed from magic, one should beware of applying such interpretations to their cures. The laws of sympathy although employed in many magical spells by witches and cunning folk, were also widely recognised by surgeons and astrologers. The last thing many of these unofficial practitioners wanted was to be dragged down in the same theological arguments that were being directed at witches, but at the same time they saw in white witchcraft a threat to their livelihood and were as a consequence equally willing to criticise magical healing themselves.³ As a result they often justified their remedies on religious and rational grounds, while at the same time condemned cures that professed to utilise magic, charms and spells.⁴

One method of curing which its adherents were keen to dissociate from any diabolical influence lay in the realm of sympathetic magic and its use as a method of curing the sick. Sympathetic magic was not new and by the seventeenth century its principles were well established.⁵ Indeed there was a host of these types of spells that had always been used by people in early-modern times. To cure the ague one could go to a field where two cart tracks crossed, dig a hole and urinate in it. To cure

² N. Culpepper, *The English Physitian Enlarged* (London, 1653), pp. 30, 88, 108.

³ The astrologer Hardwick Warren resented the fact that healing witches professed to use magic, when in fact he thought they were merely utilising a 'diabolical art': H. Warren, *Magic and Astrology vindicated From those false Aspersions and Calumnies, which the Ignorance of some hath cast upon them* (London, 1651), pp. 1-3.

⁴ Nicholas Culpepper stressed that although herbs might cure the sick, it was God who had made such cures available for man's use: N. Culpepper, *The English Physitian Enlarged*, p. 15.

⁵ See Appendix 2.

distemper, boil an egg in the patient's urine and then bury it in an ant hill. As the ants ate the egg so the illness would disappear.⁶ Whooping cough sufferers could stand on the beach at high tide: when the tide went out, it would carry the cough with it.⁷ Magic linked to the turning of the tides was also a common feature. The ceaseless ebb and flow of the tide had obvious sympathetic qualities with the life cycle of Mankind. Shakespeare must have been familiar with it, for he made Falstaff die 'even between twelve and one, even at the turning o' the tide'.⁸

Similar forms of sympathetic medicine were employed by continental soldiers earlier in the century. The French surgeon Ambrose Paré wrote in 1617 that he knew of soldiers who ate gun powder in order to protect themselves from shot: 'I have seen by experience, that some soldiers being hurt, will take of the sayde powder in wine, saying; That powder so taken, doth preserve the body from ensuing accidents, the which I approve not'. He added, 'I have observed it to bee the practice of the Hollanders being wounded by Gun shot, to dissolve two charges of powder in wine, and to drink it off, hoping by that meanes to be freed from all future accidents which may happen upon their wounds'. Paré included the formula for a special balm to deal with gunshot wounds that was taught to him by 'an exceedingly famous chirurgion', which sounds like a veritable witches brew if ever there was, and for that reason is worth quoting in full:

He sent me to fetch him two young whelps, one pound of earth wormes, two pounds of the oyle of Lillies, six ounces of the Terebinth of Venice, and one ounce of Aqua-vitae: and in my presence he boiled the whelpes alive in the saide oyle, until the flesh departed from the bones. Afterward we took the wormes (having before killed and purified them in white wine, to purge themselves of the earth which they have always in their bodies:) being so prepared, he boyled them also in the said oyle till they became dry, then he strained thorough a Napkin, without any great expressions; that done hee added thereto the Terebinth, and lastly the Aqua-vitae; and called God to witnesse, that this was his balm which he used in all wounds made by Gun-shot.⁹

⁶ W. Drage, *Daemonomageia*, pp. 34-39.

⁷ R. Porter, 'Medicine and the Decline of Magic', *Cheiron Society Newsletter* (Spring, 1988), p. 41.

⁸ W. Shakespeare, *Henry V*, II, iii.

⁹ A. Paré, *The method of curing Wounds*, p. 5. According to Roy Porter, 'As late as 1885 a woman was reported as skinning alive a new born puppy, boiling it up and giving the soup to her weakly child, to

This concoction, which seems to combine the skills of alchemist and magician, demonstrates the confusion that could be encountered when differentiating certain aspects of unofficial healing from the demonic. In practice invoking the power of God and taking advantage of the ingredients He had provided for the benefit of mankind seems to have been the deciding factor in differentiating demonic cures from natural ones. As the author of such a formula would no doubt have pointed out, the cure contained ingredients that God had provided for the benefit of Man rather than resorting to help from the devil.

Throughout the English Civil War there were numerous examples of charms, tokens and alchemical or herbal remedies to protect soldiers. It is very likely that many of the above examples detailing the sympathetic healing qualities of gunpowder invoked by soldiers from the Low Countries, were in turn practised by English soldiers during the 1640s. This is especially true when one considers the numbers, notably on the Royalist side, who had previously served in Holland. The Rector of St. Andrews Undershaft parish in London, Thomas Woodcock (1606-1695),¹⁰ described how he knew of a soldier who was able to cure a gentleman of the stone by pouring a bandoleer of gunpowder into a glass of white wine and making him drink it. When the gentleman asked for assurance that the concoction would remove the stone the soldier assured him that it would: 'Oh, Sir, says he, if you had seen the stones that I have seen gunpowder remove You would not wonder at it'.¹¹ John Aubrey also recorded a specific charm to make a man gun proof: 'write these characters +ZADA+ZADASH+ZADTHAM+ABIRA+ on virgin paper, carry it with you, and no gun shot can hurt you'.¹² Carlo Fantom, a Croatian mercenary fighting first for Parliament and later for the King, was said to be shot-free by virtue of a special herb that was known only to the keepers of the forests where he had lived, and which had

make it grow strong': R. Porter, 'Medicine and the Decline of Magic', *Cheiron Newsletter* (Spring, 1988), p. 42.

¹⁰ Ejected in 1662.

¹¹ *Camden Misc.* 3rd series, vol. 13 (1907), p. 81.

¹² R. Porter, 'Medicine and the Decline of Magic', *Cheiron Newsletter* (Spring, 1988), p. 41.

been administered to him as a child. They were known as 'Hard Men' and could only be killed by a silver bullet, or by being beaten to death with cudgels. Aubrey wrote:

Sir Robert Pye was his Colonel, who shot at him for not returning a horse that he tooke away before the Regiment ... Many are yet living that sawe it. Capt. Hamden was by: The bullets went through his Buff-coat, and Capt. H. sawe his shirt on fire. Capt. Carl. Fantom tooke the Bullets, and sayd he, Sir Rob. Here, take your bullets again. None of the Soldiers would dare fight with him: they sayd, they would not fight with the Devil.¹³

Other accounts described how soldiers were even prepared to make compacts with the devil in order to ensure their safety. One such demonic pact was described in a pamphlet published in 1652 which described how a soldier was made shot free by being given a special ring. The soldier had been serving for 11 years in the Low Countries. Together with two others he had gone to a Jesuit and paid him 43s. for making a covenant that protected them both from gun-shot for a period of 5 years. During this time he was never hurt, despite being hit by many bullets. In 1643, after the protection had expired, he renewed the covenant with the Jesuit, this time for 14 years. The covenant was signed in his own blood and stipulated that he gave up his soul to the devil upon his death. In addition the Jesuit gave him an enchanted ring which would show him where money was buried and also provide him with the means of escaping danger. He returned the ring in 1648, much to his regret. According to the pamphlet, he was 'hanged in chaines' for the offence of witchcraft.¹⁴

The above cases demonstrate the thin line between demonic magic and the tacitly acceptable magic used by healers. The use of charms was especially so, for it was generally accepted that this was heretical, in the sense that the person was placing his faith in an object rather than God. For many Protestant divines the only permissible way to deal with illness was to seek out an authorised physician or appeal to God's mercy through prayer and fasting.¹⁵ Such attitudes towards the use of charms

¹³ J. Aubrey, *Gentilisme*, ed. J. M. Cohen, *Three Prose Works* (London, 1972), pp. 250-1.

¹⁴ BL, TT E 659 (15), *The Tryall, Examination, and Confession, of Giles Fenderlin, who made a covenant with the Devil for 14 years* (London, 1652).

¹⁵ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1628), eds. F. Dell, & P. Jordan-Smith (New York, 1939), pp. 383-4.

has led Keith Thomas to assert that in practice the absence of charms as an accompaniment to the medicine became the test to see if magic was involved, and by doing this contemporaries were able to differentiate between a physician and a charmer.¹⁶ However, there was much ambiguity over this amongst contemporaries. Take for example the wearing of an amulet for the prevention of colic. This could be classified as magical, but for the seventeenth-century wearer of such a device, it was 'based on contemporary scientific assumptions about the physical properties of certain substances and their effects on the functioning of human bodies'.¹⁷

During the mid seventeenth century such sympathetic cures, which had always existed in folklore, began to be justified by learned men on rational grounds. The Paracelsian view that disease was brought about by an external agent, usually in the form of star-borne poisons that attacked a particular organ or organs in the body, thus causing symptoms specific to the external poison, became especially popular with healers who were keen to find an alternative to the Galenic view that disease was merely an imbalance of the humours.¹⁸ The principle that 'like cures like' and that all diseases had cures which were naturally available to man also proved extremely useful to herbalists such as Nicholas Culpepper and astrologers like William Lilly. Paracelsus argued that God had created all plants on the planet and many of these bore signs of His intention that they should be used to cure disease. The '*Satyrion* root', formed like the male genitalia, could be used to restore virility. The '*Siegwurz* root' was wrapped in an envelope-like armour and could be used to afford protection against weapons. The '*Syderica*' bore the image and form of a snake and thus gave protection against poisoning.¹⁹ By practising these ideas many healers were able to

¹⁶ K. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 227.

¹⁷ C. Larner, 'Healing in pre-industrial Britain', unpub. paper (March 1976), University of Glasgow. Furthermore, as Christina Larner points out, today we still wear copper bracelets against rheumatism.

¹⁸ Paracelsus (1493-1541) had followed the German folk principle that 'like cures like', arguing all diseases had cures, and they were all naturally available to Man, having been placed there by God: *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, ed. J. Jacobi (Princeton University Press, 1951), pp. 122-3. See also Appendix 3 for a summary of the humoral system of medicine.

¹⁹ *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, p. 137.

justify alchemical preparations to cure disease. Such views began to enjoy a revival during the English Civil War and Interregnum, partly as a response to the rise in the popularity of Cartesian dualism which declared that there were no such things as occult forces in stones or plants, no sympathies or antipathies and nothing in nature which could not be explained in corporeal terms. As a result it has been estimated during the 1640s and 1650s that there were probably more alchemical works translated into English than in the proceeding 100 years.²⁰

One such treatise by the author, naval commander and diplomatist, Sir Kenelm Digby (1603-1665), was translated in 1658. He justified his sympathetic cure for wounds on the grounds of logic, coupled with Paracelsian reasoning. He argued that all objects coming into contact with each other exchanged atoms or particles and because of this it was possible to effect a cure for wounds by utilising a vitriol made from a 'powder of sympathy', together with the shot or weapon that came into contact with, or actually caused, the wound.²¹ He was eager to stress that any cure effected this way was not magical but was instead based on natural laws. A friend of his received a sword-cut across the palm of his hand whilst trying to break up a fight. Asking for the bandage used to bind the wound, he placed it in the vitriol, into which he had earlier placed some 'sympathetic powder'. When he hung the bandage near a fire to dry, the wounded man's servant came to him and explained that his master was suffering from a burning pain in his wound. Digby assured the servant that he would rectify this. He then placed the bandage in water and later established that his friend's wound was soothed, and then cured. Digby reasoned that this occurred because the atoms in the blood and the vitriol were drawn up from the bandage by the sun. In the meantime the wound exhaled what he called 'hot fiery spirits' and the air around the hand was drawn up into the air and a current formed between the wound and the bandage. Since like attracted like, the atoms from the bandage were swept through the

²⁰ K. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 270, who based his claim on W. Cooper, *A Catalogue of Chymicall Books* (London, 1675), p. 56.

²¹ K. Digby, *A Late Discovery Made in a Solemne Assembly of Nobles and Learned Men at Montpellier in France*, trans. R. White (London, 1658), pp. 1-3.

air to their source, the wound. Thus, a type of sympathetic air corridor was opened up through which the atoms could pass, resulting in the wound being healed, no matter how far from the bandage. Moreover, this process could just as easily be performed with the weapon that caused the wound. Such was the popularity of this book that it went into 29 editions and it was said that every surgeon in the country knew the formula for the powder.²²

Such a theme was later taken up by Albertus Otto Faber, who published a relation of cures in 1663, many of them cited from Paracelsus, in which he described the benefits of the 'Oleum de Lapide Butleri', a kind of vitriol which cured by sympathy. He found that a stone dipped in this oil could be used to effect cures, especially the gout, King's evil and lameness. 'Likewise many being troubled in mind, and many troubled with head-ach have been soon refreshed with some few drops upon the tongue'. He knew of a 6 year-old boy who had been cured of the bladder stone by such means, and an old man of 62 who had been cured in the same way after he had suffered from a rupture. 'Basil Valentine hath performed the said cure with his Lapis Ignis, so called; Paracelse with his Ludus, of which Van Helmont declareth something more plainly concerning its preperation'.²³ The idea that heat was good, and cold bad, was also a common theme. This proceeded on the logical grounds that when the body died it stiffened and grew cold, in the same way in winter it was cold and nature died. However, in the summer the warmth of the sun brought life to everything. Likewise, according to Faber, if this was applied to Man one could say that when he was warm he was alive. The blood of Man contained a hot fiery

²² K. Digby, *A Late Discovery* (London, 1658), pp. 3-11. The poet and scholar, John Dryden, was obviously well aware of the cure for wounds through sympathy. In his play the *Tempest* he has Ariel say of the wounded Hippolito: 'He must be dressed again, as I have done it, anoint the sword which pierced him with this weapon salve and wrap it close from air, till I have time to visit him again'. Later Miranda unwraps the sword and Hippolito felt the cold air on his wound and the pain was worse than ever. When she wiped and anointed the sword and wrapped it up again the pain suddenly left him. J. Dryden, *The Tempest*, V. I, V. 2.

²³ A. O. Faber, *A relation of some notable Cures*, pp. 3, 4.

spirit which gave him life. Therefore a physician who attempted to quench a burning spirit with cold things weakened the fire of life.²⁴

Although many healers were keen to defend the use of such methods on what one could call metaphysical grounds, it was in the prescribing of charms that many fell foul of Puritan writers. For the white witch or cunning man the charm was one of the most lucrative of the many weapons at his disposal in parting seventeenth-century people from their money. The difficulty was that the use of charms advocated by such authors, although defended on metaphysical grounds, was increasingly seen by many theologians as blatantly demonic because they relied on an abandonment in the belief of the healing power of God. During the early seventeenth century a host of diatribes was published condemning the use of charms as demonic. The Puritan divine, William Perkins, thought charms were merely a 'watchword to the devil'.²⁵ For Perkins, there was nothing in the world that had not been created by God, so it followed nothing took place without his ordinance. Ironically, this very argument was used by the defenders of herblore later in the century. They reasoned they were merely taking advantage of the gifts God had bestowed on the world for man's use, which then cured the patient magically.²⁶ However, it was not enough for Perkins that the power of the healer was used for the good. For him it was better to die of an illness than to tempt God by seeking help at the hands of a charmer, as their help was 'dangerous and commeth from the devill, whereupon if ye rest your selves, ye joyne league with him'.²⁷ The problem for ordinary people was that it mattered little who cured them so long as they were healed. Richard Burton, in his *Anatomy of Meloncholy*, summarised the dilemma many must have felt when considering gaining relief for an illness from a white witch. 'If a man fall into a ditch, as he prosecutes it,

²⁴ A. O. Faber, *Some Kindling Sparks In matters of Physic, to satisfy some physicians, who are of the opinion, That Spirits (which they call hot things) do burn and inflame the body* (London, 1668), pp. 1-2.

²⁵ W. Perkins, *A Discourse*, pp. 130, 133.

²⁶ N. Culpepper, *The English Physitian Enlarged*, p. 15.

²⁷ W. Perkins, *A Discourse*, p. 156.

what matter is it whether a friend or an enemy help him out? and if I be troubled with such a malady, what care I whether the Devil himself, or any of his Ministers, by God's permission, redeem me?'²⁸ However, Burton warned people that this reasoning was highly dangerous because the Bible expressly forbade it as a mortal sin. Evil was not to be done so that good might come from it. The only lawful cures were praying to God for help, and physic, 'not one without the other, but both together'. Such cures were those that God had appointed:

by virtue of stones, herbs, plants, meats & c. and the like, which are prepared and applied to our use by art and industry of physicians, who are dispensers of such treasure for our good, and are to be honoured for necessities' sake, God's intermediate ministers, to whom in our infirmities we are to seek for help.²⁹

Of course this is exactly what the Paracelsian healers were claiming they were doing.

It is hardly surprising that unorthodox healing methods and healers became the subject of heated debate amongst learned theologians, scholars and physicians. The widespread attack on such methods in turn led to a proliferation in accounts defending such practices and the translation and publication of magical works from earlier centuries. Perhaps the most popular of these was the astrologer and herbalist Nicholas Culpepper, who in 1651 published *Semiotica Uranica, or an Astronomical Judgement of Diseases*, based on Arabic and Greek writings, demonstrating the relation between astrology and disease. He argued that just as the various constellations were believed to provide clues to events on Earth, so too could the planets and especially the moon, if used in conjunction with the astrological sign of the patient, be used to determine health. A planet caused disease by either sympathy or antipathy. Indeed sympathy and antipathy were the two hinges upon which the whole of physic turned, and the physician who ignored this was like a 'Door off from the Hooks, more likely to do a man a mischief than to secure him'. The diseases caused by Saturn by sympathy, for example, were toothache, broken bones, (because he ruled the bones), deafness (because he ruled the ears) and all the diseases of the spleen. In addition he afflicted

²⁸ R. Burton, *Anatomy of Meloncholy*, p. 383.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 384.

all the parts of the body that were under the moon by antipathy, likewise with the sun. Thus to cure a disease it was necessary to know whether to use a sympathetic cure or a cure by antipathy. This information could then be used to pick the correct herbs which were sympathetic to the planet in order to cure the disease.³⁰ Of greater popularity was his *English Physician Enlarged* (1653), which ran to 51 editions. This best-seller not only included formulas for the curing of practically all known diseases, but also launched a scathing attack on established healers and the College of Physicians whom he described as 'having as much skil in Distillations as an Ass hath in reading Hebrew'.³¹ Additionally, he stressed the very point that must have made alternative healers so popular in early-modern England: their cheapness as compared with physicians. The high cost of consulting with physicians is demonstrated by the payments made by Anthony Nicholson, a hypochondriac book-seller from Cambridge, who had been affected with pains over his body for 23 years. He had taken all the best advice of the doctors in Cambridge, had 'been at Bath in Somersetshire; and been at above one hundred pound expense to procure ease, or a Cure of these pains'.³² In contrast to such exorbitant expenses, Culpepper emphasised that the works of God had been freely given to mankind and were easy to find, whereas the medicines of the College of Physicians were 'dear and scarce to find'.³³ Furthermore, he likened the College of Physicians to Drones who sat at home eating up what the bees had worked hard to gather:

Just so do our Colledge of Physitians, lie at home and domineer, and suck out the sweetness of other Mens labours and Studies, themselves being as ignorant in the Knowledge of Herbs as a Child of four years old, as I can make appear to any Rational man by their last Dispensatory; Now then to hide their Ignorance, there is not a readier way in the World, than to hide knowledge from their Country men, that so no body might be able so much to smel out their ignorance. When

³⁰ N. Culpepper, *Semiotica Uranica*, pp. 85-6, 100, 134.

³¹ N. Culpepper, *The English Physitian Enlarged*, p. 30.

³² V. Greatrakes, *A brief account of Mr Valentine Greatrakes, and divers of the strange cures by him lately performed* (London, 1666), pp. 83-4.

³³ N. Culpepper, *The English Physitian Enlarged*, p. 15.

Simples were more in use, mens bodies were in better health by far than now they are, or shall be if the Colledge can help it.³⁴

Culpepper's work became a useful handbook for many households, and appears to have been widely used by cunning men. When attempting to cure Mary Hall of bewitchment, the Hertfordshire cunning man, Doctor Woodhouse, was said to have

read out of Master Culpeppers Books, that *Mistletoe of the Oak, was good against Witchcraft*; wherefore they got some Mistletoe, and applyed about her neck, and she trembled; and to what part soever they applyed it, so as it touched her Flesh, she trembled; by which they perceived it had prevalency against Diabolical Incantation.

However, the author explained that in this case the remedy was unsuccessful in removing the demon.³⁵

In addition surgeons were influenced by astrology. The state of the moon had always been thought to have a direct bearing on diseases of the mind, but was also important when performing neurological operations. The Royalist surgeon Richard Wiseman described how he once had to deal with a patient who had been stabbed through the top of his head with a dagger. A few days later the patient became 'hemiplegic and aphasic, surgery was clearly indicated'. However, the trepanation was delayed because of the 'Full moon, at which time the Brain is thought to rise high, and the vessels are turgid'.³⁶ Paré also argued that all surgeons should have an understanding of the celestial bodies: 'the Philosophers and Physicians have expresly commanded, that wee should have a principall regarde unto the situation and motions of the heavenly bodies, and constitutions of the aire, when the preservation of health, or the curation of diseases are in question'.³⁷

By 1660 books were being published which included a far more overtly occult theme in the healing methods they propounded. The anonymously written *Occult Physick* (1660) was a work in much the same style as Culpepper's because it mixed herblore with astrology. However the title of the work implied it was very much

³⁴ N. Culpepper, *The English Physitian Enlarged*, p. 108.

³⁵ W. Drage, *Daimonomegia*, p. 36.

³⁶ L. Bakay, 'Richard Wiseman, a Royalist Surgeon of the English Civil War', *Surgical Neurology*, 27 (1987), 415-8, p. 417.

³⁷ A. Paré, *The Method of curing wounds*, p. 29.

based on magical principles. Indeed the author did not attempt to gloss over the fact that many of the cures set out in the book were based on folklore. This is especially the case in the first section which dealt specifically with the cures derived from animals, many of them mythological. He included the Unicorn, the hoof of which was better than the horn, and if worn would prevent any infection. Presumably it was easier to fool somebody with a hoof - which could be taken from any equine - than a horn. The stones of an elephant if dried and hung around the neck of a pregnant woman would cause a speedy and safe delivery. The tongue of a beaver, if dried and cured would heal apoplexy. The horns of a Stag appear to have had many uses, including a contraceptive, but only for men. For women it usually resulted in greater fertility. The second section of the book stressed the way in which cures could be achieved through the numerous natural remedies that God had left on the Earth. To call the curing properties of such herbs magical seems to have been perfectly acceptable:

this faculty which is called Magical, doth consist in Words, Characters, and Herbs; it is known that the Characters and Words though they may signifie but little, are far more powerful, and better than Corporeal things, so that not only by ten medicaments, but even with three or four Words, or Characters, all Diseases may be helped and healed that are hot to death, because none can live beyond the hour appointed to him by God.³⁸

This passage also helps to demonstrate the quite different meaning of the term 'magic' from its modern usage. During early modern times magic could be seen as the utilisation of the gifts that God had left for Man's benefit on Earth. In this sense it was the harnessing of the forces of nature for the benefit of mankind.³⁹

The widespread popularity of unofficial healers was at least recognised by many contemporary writers although they were not always supported. In 1608 William Perkins pointed out that charmers were more sought after than physicians in time of

³⁸ W. W. Philosophus, *Occult Physick, or the three principles in Nature Anotomized by a Philosophical operation, taken from experience, in three Books* (London, 1660), pp. 1, 2, 4, 125.

³⁹ The occultist, Hardwick Warren argued that the art of magic was the art of worshipping God and the bending of nature to the will of man: H. Warren, *Magic & Astrology vindicated From those False Aspersions and Calumnies, which the Ignorance of some hath cast upon them* (London, 1651), p. 3.

need. 'There be a charm for all conditions and ages of men, for divers kinds of creatures, yea for every disease; as for head-ach, tooth-ach, stitches and such like'.⁴⁰ The problem was, by the seventeenth century, local folk remedies passed down by word of mouth had received a widespread acceptance. Even the Puritan minister Ralph Josselin seems to have been reluctant to call on the services of a recognised physician. When his three year-old daughter Mary suffered from a 'great cold', during which she 'strained and spit much blood', he and his wife sought help from a local gentlewoman, Lady Honeywood. Jane Josselin also took 7 month-old Ralph to 'Lady Honeywood's' to consult with her about his problems. Ralph Josselin reported the incident in his diary as follows: 'my Lady fears he is in consumption, but indeed he is troubled with the rickets, my Lady adviseth an issue to which my wife hath no mind, God in his mercy bless other means that are used'.⁴¹ In this case Josselin seems to be mixing two methods of healing. He is attending an unofficial healer, condemned by some as demonic, but also praying to God that the cure or treatment prescribed, would work. On another occasion he appears to have relied on a wholly sympathetic cure without recourse to prayer. On 5 September 1645 he described being stung by a bee and explained that the remedy for this was to rub some honey on it. Presumably this sympathetic cure had been passed down to him in some anecdotal fashion.

There is no doubt that cunning folk were not only popular but also widely available.⁴² If the playwright, Thomas Heywood, is to be believed, the duties of cunning folk could also be remarkably diverse. Their popularity and adaptability to almost any role is illustrated in his comedy play, *The Wise-Woman of Hogsdon*, when he has the wise woman say

you have heard of Mother Notingham, who for her time was prettily well skill'd in casting of waters: and after her, Mother Bambye; and then there is one Hatfield in Pepper-Alley, hee doth prettie well for a thing that's lost. There's another in Coleharbour, that's skilled in the Planets. Mother Sturton in Golden-Lane, is for Forespeaking: Mother

⁴⁰ W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, p. 152.

⁴¹ A. Macfarlane, ed., *Diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616-1683* (London, 1976), pp. 40-41, 186.

⁴² K. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 291-6, 326, estimates their numbers may have been comparable with the numbers of the parochial clergy.

Phillips of the Banke-Side, for the weakness of the backe: and then there's a very reverent Matron on Clerkenwell-Green, good at many things: Mistriss Mary on the Banke-side, is for resting a Figure: and one (what doe you call her) in Westminster, that practiseth the Beake and the key, and the Sive and the Sheares: and all doe well according to their talent.

Moreover, the cunning man or cunning woman's skills also extended into other fields which would have brought them into direct conflict with the clergy. According to Heywood these could include the performing of marriage ceremonies and the running of brothels.⁴³ The association of cunning women with the running of brothels may not have been as far-fetched as one might think in view of the widespread popularity of the prescribing of love potions and love magic.⁴⁴

Despite the fact that many Puritan clergymen were attacking such healing practices as diabolic, even atheistic, this did not stop unofficial practitioners from working or being sought out by the public. After his release from New Bridewell, the Ranter and ex-Leveller, Laurence Clarkson, became an itinerant cunning man touring Cambridgeshire and Essex. His account demonstrated the popularity of such healers and also the profits that could be made performing such a service. He described how his studies of astrology and magic had enabled him to find lost property and heal the sick. Although he described gaining 'much monies', he says 'he was looked upon as a dangerous man, that the ignorant and religious people was afraid to come near me' despite his having cured 'many desperate diseases'.⁴⁵

Further evidence of the popularity of such unofficial healing methods can be found in the testimonials listed by the famous Irish stoker Valentine Greatrakes, who in 1666 published a defence of his practices which had been attacked as diabolical. In it he listed 67 people who were willing to testify to being cured of various illnesses by him. In order to counter the allegations that his cures were demonic or that he was an

⁴³ T. Heywood, *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon* (London, 1638), sg. B3.

⁴⁴ Sally Scully, in her study of witchcraft in Venice during the mid seventeenth-century, concluded that for many, witchcraft and prostitution went hand-in-hand, often through the supplying of love potions and love magic: S. Scully, 'Marriage or a career?: Witchcraft as an alternative in seventeenth-century Venice', *Journal of Social History*, vol. 28, no. 4 (1995), p. 859.

⁴⁵ L. Claxton, *The Lost Sheep Found: or, The Prodigal returned to his Fathers house* (London, 1660), pp. 32-3.

atheist, he stressed it was God who performed the miracle through him. In each case he described how the illness or pain was like a tangible foreign presence in the afflicted body, analogous to a case of possession by the devil. He was in a way performing an exorcism, driving out the evil or demonic spirit from the patient's body. Often the pain would be moved from one part of the body to another and then finally expelled, usually from the fingers or toes, but sometimes out of the mouth. He described how in one of his cases

the pain removed out of her stomach into her left side; thence at a second stroking it removed into her thighs and legs; and lastly into her right foot and toes, whereinto (her eyes being covered) a pin was thrust divers times without her feeling or being sensible of it, until her foot and toes were stroaked; but then she immediately started at the first touch of the pin, and she declared her pains were gone, as well out of her foot and toes, as out of all other parts.⁴⁶

The description that the area of greatest corruption or pain was insensible to pain is symptomatic of many of his testimonials. It is difficult to hypothesise why this should be so, but this aspect of the healing process certainly suggests a demonic origin to the illness. It was almost as if the vile corruption of the disease prevented pain on the external part of the body. In his description of his stroking of patients he described how the corruption causing the illness was chased around the body. When it reached the fingers or the toes it had reached a sort of cul-de-sac and had nowhere else to go except out. Again, like cases of possession by the devil where the victim often vomited up foreign objects such as pins, coals and needles, Greatrakes's descriptions of the corruption within the patient implied a certain element of the supernatural. In one case Greatrakes dealt with a tumour in the leg of a girl of 12. Out of this tumour he 'took out divers kernels; those that were hard, by his handling tended to supperation'. On another occasion he described how he took a lance and made a 'small orafice' in a man suffering from tumours: 'with a little compressing the part there flies out hundreds of small bodies, some as big as French-beans, they flew out like to a shower of hail, with a windy stink'.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ V. Greatrakes, *A brief account*, pp. 52-53.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 93.

Such descriptions of his patients were almost certainly chosen to appeal to the widespread knowledge of demonic imagery. The correlation was deliberately made between the illness and possession by describing the corruption within the body in as supernatural a way as possible. In addition, when this corruption was concentrated, as when it was forced to an extremity in the body, it appeared to have desensitised that part of the body. The comparison with popular belief concerning the insensibility of the witch's mark is obvious. Witches were also thought to be possessed with evil, and this evil was most concentrated in the witch's teat because it was from here that her familiar gained sustenance. Witch-finders often described how, when squeezed, the teat issued forth some vile corruption and how one could stick a pin in it and the suspected witch would feel no pain. When the witch-hunter, Mathew Hopkins, was questioned as to how he could tell the difference between a natural mark and the witch's mark he answered that they were commonly insensible. If the witch was left alone for 24 hours the teat would also grow and be 'full of corruption ready to burst' because the Imp had not sucked on it.⁴⁸

Unofficial healers not only came into conflict with the Anglican church, but also with many learned physicians. Just as the Reformation had removed many of the healing functions of the old Catholic church, with the discontinuance of the sacraments and the use of holy water, so too the challenges to Galenic medicine and the rise of empiricism had meant that many magical healers were coming into conflict with physicians. The problem was compounded by the belief in witchcraft by many physicians, and some actually diagnosing it on occasion. As late as 1711 when the Wiltshire witch Jane Wenham was accused of making the 16 year-old Anne Thorn go into fits, a physician declared that 'it must be either counterfeit or supernatural'.⁴⁹ The Northamptonshire physician, John Cotta, in a work published in 1625, advocated that the best method of discovering if a person was bewitched was to take a physician's advice on the subject, and not to consult a cunning man or cunning woman as many

⁴⁸ M. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ E. C. Ewen, *Witchcraft*, pp. 384-389.

people did. He attacked other methods of detection of witches, such as the water ordeal, mainly on rational grounds.⁵⁰ Cotta questioned the argument that water, being the same element used in baptism, rejected the witch because she had rejected baptism and God. If this was the case then bread or wine should also reject the witch, as these were elements of consecration too. Moreover, he felt it wrong to attribute the properties of a small amount of holy water to water in general. Instead he listed two points that gave a clue to bewitchment:

The first is, when in the likeness and similtude of a disease, the secret working of a supernatural power doth hide it selfe, having no cause or possibilitie of being in that kinde or nature. The second is, when naturall remedies or meanes according unto Art and due discretion applyed, doe extraordinarily or miraculously either lose their manifest inevitable nature, use, and operation, or else produce effects and consequences, against or above their nature, the impossibilitie of either of these in usuall or ordinarie course of nature, doth certainly proove an infalibilitie of a superior nature, which assuredly therefore must needs be either Divine or Diabolical.⁵¹

It should not be thought such attacks were confined to cunning folk, rather his criticisms were more general including the host of other types of medical practitioners, such as quacks and even surgeons. In one passage Cotta described how a woman (a parson's wife of Northamptonshire) had complained of a tumour in her breast. He recounted her later fits and her languishing over 6 months before dying:

This strong imagination, with this strange event, might have intangled many a poore spinster in a thicker string then her cunning could untwist, to save the cracking of her neck. But if we wold more duly oft examine and weigh these cases, they shall many times find the witch in a foolish sconce; and greater and more dangerous are the bewitchings of a mans owne folly, and more effectual oftentimes unto his owne hurt and other, then any witch, yea or divell whatsoever.

To reinforce this point Cotta wrote that it later transpired the woman had died after taking some medicine given to her by a 'wandering surgeon'.⁵² Thus in this case it is the itinerant surgeon who comes under criticism, not the cunning man or cunning woman. Indeed for Cotta and other physicians there was little difference between

⁵⁰ The trial by water had been justified by James VI in his *Daemonologie* (p. 81.) on biblical grounds.

⁵¹ J. Cotta, *The Infallible True and Assured Witch: or The Second Edition of the Tryall of Witchcraft* (London, 1625), pp. 136, 79.

⁵² J. Cotta, *A short Discoverie*, p. 53.

such practitioners and witches. The importance of Cotta's work is not his concern about the practice of *maleficium*, rather it is the opposite category - those who professed to do good - that he was criticising. In this he was fortunate to live in an age whose religious authorities were viewing all such unofficial healing practices as demonic, because it provided physicians with a ready religious justification for attacking unofficial healers who were their competitors.

It seems physicians, like many clergymen, did not seek to deny the existence of witchcraft, but instead wished to challenge the threat that alternative healers presented to their profession. It is for this reason Cotta attacked the superstitious beliefs that led people to believe witches could perform acts of *maleficium* as well as acts of healing. Like others before him, he believed the witch had been deceived by the devil into thinking she had a particular power, the real crime being the making of a pact with the devil. For Puritan divines and physicians alike, the only cure for bewitchment was through prayer and fasting and not by resorting to white witches. Richard Bernard argued that: 'The best is *Fasting and Prayer*, to remove a divell, as before hath beene delivered: for God onely can free us from Divels and witches, and his meanes appointed must we only use, and therein expect from him a blessing'.⁵³

The widespread animosity amongst qualified physicians to cunning folk is further illustrated by the numbers who were willing to testify against witches in court and also to diagnose patients as suffering from bewitchment. The precedent for this had been laid down in numerous demonological works. In *Malleus Maleficarum* it was stated that: 'if it is asked how it is possible to distinguish whether an illness is caused by some natural physical defect, we answer that the first [way] is by means of the judgement of doctors'. The physician might perceive from the patient's age, complexion and reaction of the eyes, that the disease did not arise from any defect of the blood or stomach, or any other infirmity. Therefore they may

judge that it is not due to any natural defect, but to some extrinsic cause. And since that extrinsic cause cannot be any posonous infection, which would be accompanied by ill humours in the blood

⁵³ R. Bernard, *Guide to Grand juryemen*, pp. 196-7.

and stomach, they have sufficient reason to judge that it is due to witchcraft.⁵⁴

This advice is repeated in *A Guide to Grand Jurymen*, by Richard Bernard.⁵⁵ In the American colonies, as well, 'the verdict of physicians' became a prime test for the presence or absence of witchcraft.⁵⁶ Perhaps the most famous English example was the celebrated witchcraft trial of Amy Denny and Rose Cullender in 1662 in Suffolk. In addition to the physicians Sir Thomas Browne and Dr Feavor giving their opinion at the trial that they thought the victims had been bewitched, an unofficial cunning man, Dr Jacob of Great Yarmouth, testified it was he who had initially diagnosed witchcraft.⁵⁷ This case illustrates how cunning folk were more than willing to pronounce a sick person bewitched in order to establish their credibility as a healer. Because it was accepted that qualified physicians could testify in court against an accused witch, it would have been tempting for cunning folk to establish their acceptability as alternative physicians by doing the same. Certainly the number of cunning folk who were willing to pronounce a person bewitched would seem to indicate that this may have been so.⁵⁸ The implications of this for qualified physicians was serious as they would have perceived such opinions as a threat to their own monopoly in such matters.

Despite diagnosing that a person was bewitched, cunning folk often found themselves prosecuted for witchcraft, and it would be advantageous at this stage to analyse how this came to be. A typical example occurred in August 1654. A cunning man, Christopher Hall, of Harply, Norfolk, had been consulted about 'a sore on the

⁵⁴ H. Krämer & J. Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum*, p. 87.

⁵⁵ R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen*, pp. 168-9.

⁵⁶ S. J. Fox, *Science and Justice: The Massachusetts witchcraft trial* (John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1968), p. 64.

⁵⁷ G. Geis & I. Bunn, 'Sir Thomas Browne and Witchcraft. A cautionary tale for contemporary law and psychiatry', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, vol. 4 (1981), pp. 1-11, mistakenly claim (p. 1, fn.) that no other reference to this trial exists apart from *A Tryal of witches at the assizes ... at Bury St. Edmunds* (London, 1682), however details of the trial appear in Dr William Library, MS 46, f. 647, Judge Hale Papers, repr. in 'A trial of Witches: 17 Charles II A.D., 1665', T. B. Howell, *State Trials* (London, 1810), vol. vi, pp. 688-9, 691, 697.

⁵⁸ K. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 218-21, 247, 296-7, 315-16, 648-9, 650, 653-6, 600 for numerous examples.

In a similar way, when the daughter of George Muschamp suffered from fits, the cunning man, John Hutton, diagnosed that she had been bewitched. However he was later suspected of bewitching her and arrested. He subsequently died in Newcastle gaol.⁶⁰ Another account demonstrating how a cunning woman could fall from grace was the 'witch of Wapping', Joan Peterson. One witness testified that the doctors had failed to give him any relief from a headache, so he went to Joan Peterson and was given a potion which had cured him. Here she had been clearly consulted as a cunning woman. Another witness (a cow keeper's wife) went to Peterson because she suspected one of her cows had been bewitched. Peterson boiled some of the urine from the afflicted cow which then 'rose up in bubbles, in one of which she shewed her the face of the woman which the cow-keepers wife suspected to have bewitched it'. Petersons' downfall was typical of many cunning folk turned witches. If they had the power to cure, then they could also withhold that power and thus become evil. When Christopher Wilson fell sick, he visited Peterson and she agreed for a certain sum of money to treat him. After curing him he refused to pay her, whereupon she burst out 'you had been better you had given me my money for you shall be ten times worse than ever you were'. It seems hardly surprising, given such an opportunity to avoid his debts, that he went into fits, raved like a mad man and accused her of bewitching him. Her evil acts now began to mount up against her. Two women who were watching over a sick child, reported seeing 'a great black cat come to the cradles side, and rock the cradle, whereupon one of the women took up the fire-fork to strike at it, and it immediately vanished'. As they were leaving they met with a baker who told them he had been frightened by a great black cat. Because he had just met with Joan Peterson, he believed it was her who had bewitched the child.⁶¹ The case of Joan Peterson demonstrates how easily a healer's reputation could become tarnished through a bad reputation. On 12 April 1652, despite having antecedents which clearly demonstrated she had been a healer of the sick as opposed to an evil witch performing

⁶⁰ BL, TT E 181 (18), *Wonderfull Newes from the North* (London, 1650), pp. 8-20.

⁶¹ BL, TT E 659 (18), *The Witch of Wapping* (London, 1652), pp. 4, 5.

acts of malevolence against her neighbours, she was forced to climb the ladder at Tyburn.

Cunning folk could also fall foul of the law for performing a host of other popular services. The quarter sessions records at Norfolk are a rich source of such examples. Often the accused witches in these records were not simply charged with committing an act of *maleficia* or of making a compact with a familiar spirit. Instead the charges originated from an array of ancillary acts - finding lost property or providing charms - which were then used to demonstrate their guilt. The Great Yarmouth borough records contain details of a certain Mark Pryme who was almost certainly a cunning man who fell foul of the law. In his case he was charged with locating a lost felt hat belonging to John Sparke, a sailor of Great Yarmouth, by practising 'enchantments witchcraft & charms' and declared the hat was to be found in a house in 'Gorleston' in Suffolk where it was subsequently located. Another charge against him was of practising 'charms & sorcery' and declaring to John Ringer, a mason from Great Yarmouth, 'where small pieces of money which he had lost were to be found'. Also by the same means he 'declared to Anne Cann where her lost cushion was to be found'.⁶² Of the 5 presentments made against him for witchcraft, only one was for causing an illness by bewitchment. The other 4 were all for locating lost property. He was found not guilty on all these charges. Another cunning man prosecuted for locating lost property was John Lock. In 1651 he confessed he had used witchcraft and sorcery to find some stolen yarn belonging to William Fayrcloth, a weaver of Colchester. He was convicted at the Colchester quarter sessions of witchcraft and sentenced to one year's imprisonment, with 4 appearances in the pillory.⁶³

Sometimes the location of lost property was undertaken by barber surgeons as a supplement to their incomes. Edward Banbury, an apothecary living in Somerset was consulted on a number of occasions for this. On 24 May 1653, Thomas Willis of

⁶² NRO, MS Y/S1/2, ff. 93, 196.

⁶³ BL, Stowe MSS 840, f. 43.

Timsburrow Somerset, deposed that he went to Mr Banbury concerning a lost apron.

He was written a note which was appended to the deposition:

Mr I received your message concerning an apron lost, you took to a woman and entreated her to hold it but she never delivered it to you again; you asked of two for it but the first you asked have it, you shall have it again before the present May passeth. Your Edward Banbury.

For performing this service he received 2s. When he was examined concerning this incident, Banbury stressed he had ascertained where the lost apron was 'according to the rules of astrology and not by any diabolical art', and that he had 1s. which he undertook to repay again if the apron was not recovered. A further examination made on 22 June 1657 showed that Banbury had still not mended his ways for he was again consulted to locate some stolen money.⁶⁴

These cases demonstrate how such folk may have been accepted by the community, but were never trusted. So long as their remedies worked they remained popular, relatively safe and could earn a reasonable living. However, if their remedies failed or they once stepped over the line of accepted behaviour, there were plenty of people who would have been only too willing to testify against them and ensure their downfall. In view of the fact that providing remedies for witchcraft was probably one of the most frequent roles of cunning folk, and of the risk they took of being prosecuted as a result, one wonders why so many actually diagnosed a patient bewitched, rather than offering the less risky explanation that he or she might be afflicted with a natural disease. Perhaps a diagnosis in which a patient was afflicted with a natural disease might have meant the patient would have sought a remedy from another healer, whereas a diagnosis of witchcraft implied that only the cunning man or woman could effect the cure. In addition cunning folk could not escape the fact that they were unqualified and often lacked the medical knowledge to give a proper diagnosis, thus many may have resorted to diagnosing witchcraft because it was a ready interpretation for anything that could not be explained. When Thomas Ady described witchcraft as 'a cloak for physicians ignorance', he might just as well have

⁶⁴ 'Quarter Session Records for the County of Somerset', ed. Revrd. E. H. Bates-Harbin, vol. iii (1912), *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 28, lv-lvi, pp. 331-332.

been talking about cunning folk and white witches, as about physicians. For being more ignorant in official medical practice, they would have been far more likely to diagnose a supernatural cause to an illness.⁶⁵ It was also no doubt in their interests to establish a sense of mystery in order to impress the patient as much as possible because that helped to establish their reputation.

The irony is that the greater the reputation, the greater may have been the risk of being prosecuted as a malevolent witch. Even the popularity of the famous herbalist and astrologer Nicholas Culpepper seems to have offered him no protection against being tried for witchcraft. On 17 December 1643 a Nicholas Culpepper, of St Leonard's parish Shoreditch, was tried for practising witchcraft on Sarah Lynge at Middlesex sessions and acquitted by the jury.⁶⁶ We know that Culpepper was apprenticed to an apothecary of St Helen's Bishopsgate, and set himself up as an astrologer in 1640 acquiring a high reputation among patients in east London.⁶⁷ If, as seems likely, the two are one and the same, this further demonstrates the fine line dividing the popular healer from the witch.

One of the reasons healers could be prosecuted as witches is because their cures often did not work and sometimes resulted in the condition of the patient worsening. It was also recognised that many metaphysical cures could be reversed in order to cause harm. Sir Kenelm Digby's account of the cure by sympathetic powder is a case in point. As mentioned above,⁶⁸ when the bandage of his wounded friend had been placed by a fire, he had felt pain. Even though the account was written in all innocence, it nevertheless technically transgressed towards malevolent magic, as there was nothing to stop a person from using such methods to cause harm. A malevolent person could have deliberately placed the bandage in the fire and left it there, thus causing the recipient of the wound great pain. According to Digby other simple

⁶⁵ T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark*, pp. 115.

⁶⁶ *Middlesex County Records*, ed. J. C. Jeaffreson, vol. iii (1888), p. 85.

⁶⁷ *DNB*, vol. v, p. 286.

⁶⁸ See above, pp. 117-8.

everyday acts which happened to anyone could also result in injury. It was common knowledge that if a pan of milk boiled over, the wife would remove it from the fire and throw salt on the cinders. If one were to ask her why she did this she 'will tell you, that it is to prevent, that the Cow which gave the milk may not have some hurt upon her udder, for without this remedy it would come to be hard and ulcerated, and she would come to pisse blood, and so be in danger to die'.⁶⁹ Digby thus attacks the accusations that animals could have been bewitched, not on the grounds that witchcraft did not exist, but on the grounds that they could have been bewitched by mistake. If a woman had been accused of bewitching a cow it was more likely to be a simple accident, which combined with the laws of sympathy, resulted in the injury to the cow. The milk falling on the burning coals vaporised and dispersed. The atoms dispersed into the air, were transported by the sun's rays, and then returned to their source accompanied by the fiery atoms from the fire, resulting in the cow's udder becoming inflamed. A similar sympathy existed with excrement. If one took the excrement of a dog and threw it into a fire, the dog would in a short time burn all over and its intestines become inflamed. Digby warned that this also applied to humans. He explained how his neighbour's child was sick with a burning fever, which had been unwittingly caused by the child's nurse when she had covered his excrement with embers and then thrown it into the fire. Digby was able to cure the boy by taking some of his excrement and putting it in water. 'He began to ammend the very same hour, and within four or five dayes he was perfectly well recovered'.⁷⁰ The danger with this type of healing was it could easily be reversed to cause harm. In dirty unkempt country villages it was said if one farmer kept his house and garden cleaner than his neighbours, then the locals would come to the house at night and 'discharge their bellies there'. The housewife in the morning would then stick a hot poker or fire shovel in the excrement. In the mean time those responsible would feel a pain in their bowels and inflammation of their 'fundament'. 'And these women to be freed from

⁶⁹ K. Digby, *A Late Discovery*, pp. 117-118.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-129.

the like affronts so passe among the Ignorant for Soceresses, and Witches, being they torment people in that fashion without seeing them or touching them'.⁷¹

Such examples demonstrate the problem of differentiating folklore remedies from witchcraft. Indeed many of the remedies for witchcraft verged on witchcraft themselves. If one used counter magic of the type described above against a suspected witch this could still be held to be witchcraft because one was using magic for malevolent means - to harm the witch. However, this seems to have been perfectly justifiable to some writers. William Drage wrote a treatise in 1665 which provided a number of remedies for witchcraft, but in so doing he revealed a certain amount of confusion and contradiction in the methodology of sympathetic magic. According to this author the burning of the excrement of the bewitched would make the anus of the witch sore. The placing of a red hot poker into a churn when butter would not come would burn the bowels of the witch. One could stop up the bottles that the victim drank from and this would prevent the witch from passing water. If a horse or hen was bewitched it could be burnt alive and this would bring the witch.⁷² Although these remedies rely on the power of sympathetic magic they appear to be a reversal of other accounts. The burning of excrement, according to Kenelm Digby,⁷³ was used to cause pain to the person who had passed it, not to a third party. Likewise with the milk, surely placing a red hot poker in the butter churn would have harmed the udders of the cow? One possible answer to these contradictions may be that the magic or charm was really only of incidental importance compared with the intent of the magician. According to the author the use of witchcraft to cause harm or good seems to have relied on the intent of the witch, for 'if Naturall Remedies can have a Preternatural force given by Witches, to cause Diseases; why not as well, when they please, to Cure Sickness?'⁷⁴

⁷¹ K. Digby, *A Late Discovery*, pp. 127-128.

⁷² W. Drage, *Daemonomageia*, p. 21.

⁷³ See above, pp. 136.

⁷⁴ W. Drage, *Daemonomageia*, p. 23.

One case which includes many of the magical remedies listed above, concerns Mary Hall of Gaddesden Row, Hertfordshire, who was possessed by two devils. The example illustrates how a cunning man was able to employ methods which included witchcraft and magic in order to identify a suspected witch and to annul the bewitchment. Mary Hall began to fall sick in the autumn of 1663. This manifested itself in an uncontrollable shaking of one foot that later spread to both feet. Sometimes she would also suffer from convulsive fits. She was sent to Doctor Woodhouse, a cunning man of Berkhamsted, who was 'famous in curing bewitched persons'. He made an examination of the girl's urine and concluded she was bewitched. He 'prepared stinking Suffumigations, over which she held her head, and sometimes did strain to vomit, and her distemper for some weeks seemed abated'. However, she later grew worse again, this time 'mewing like Cats, barking of Dogs, roaring of Bears &c. at last a Voice spoke in her, *Pus Cat, what a Cat? nothing but mice*'. This was the start of a conversation that took place by the spirits who had possessed her. The spirits, through Hall, said they were two Imps, one belonging to Goodwife Harwood and the other to Goodwife Youngs. Sometimes they were in the shape of serpents, flies or rats. They were sent to choke Goodman Hall but had no power over him, so they choked his daughter instead. Each time attempts were made to exorcise her but the spirits remained, saying 'where is your God now?'⁷⁵

Suspecting witchcraft, Doctor Woodhouse now took some pairings from Mary Hall's nails and hung them in the chimney over night. The next morning Goodwife Harwood came. When it was decided that Goodwife Harwood should be sent before a justice, the spirits said, '*Do not have Gfe. Harwood afore the justice*'. But after she had come, and denyed them, they would say, *Let Gfe Harwood be hanged, if she will, because she denied us*'. Doctor Woodhouse appears to have finally cured the maid by giving her a charm to wear around her neck combined with a chemical preparation mainly consisting of Opium.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ W. Drage, *Daemonomageia*, p. 32.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

The methods employed by Doctor Woodhouse share many similarities with other unofficial healers. Just as the stoker Valentine Greatrakes treated ailments as a foreign presence in the body by chasing them out in order to affect a cure, we see in this case how a possession victim needed to be purged of the evil spirit by inducing vomiting. Such a case also demonstrates the apparent impossibility many must have felt in trying to differentiate these healing methods from those used by witches to bewitch a victim. The problem was that in many cases in order to deal effectively with a malevolent spell, it was necessary to understand how the spell was cast which had originally given rise to the possession or illness in the first place. Many healers professed to know how to cause harm because it was essential if they were to understand how to remove such a spell. An anonymously written manuscript of remedies for witchcraft penned in the seventeenth century illustrates this point.⁷⁷ The work lists various ailments and afflictions which could be caused by witchcraft and also declared how such spells were actually cast. Most of these spells were not demonic in origin, in the sense that they were not curses or laid on by an evil spirit, rather they were all occasioned by herbs and incantations. In this sense they were magical spells drawing on alchemical skills rather than any compact with the devil. Whether wittingly or not, this manual, in addition to listing remedies for witchcraft, was also in effect a manual of witchcraft. When dealing with lameness the author first explained the spell that caused it: 'take a toad, & strike his loynes in two, with a divillish belief that the person in whose name they strike the toad, by a divillish way shall become lame of armes & thighs &c'. There then follows the cure:

Take a quarter of Claret or red wyne, put into it of the gentle Daurant. m. v southernwood m. v. lay the patient in a bathing tub, & let the herbs seeth with the wyne, & bath him in it nyne times, then throw it into running water, & every tyme after the bath, anoynt all his members over with the Balsome of the mistletoe of the Hasel. He may also drink of these herbs, & so will he be the sooner cured.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ BL, Sloane MSS 1783, 'Remedie for Witchcraft'.

⁷⁸ Ibid., f. 70.

Another cure for lameness and the prevention of menstruation in women involved a herbal bath. But again the actual spell that caused this is first of all related to the reader. It involved pricking an apple with a needle which had been used to sew up the sheet containing a dead body. The victim then ate the apple and was afflicted by the spell. Similarly for the bewitching of young children one should take the swathing linen from the child and hang it over a smoking fire, combining the ritual with words of witchcraft. The child would then get no rest. To cure a child of this affliction again a special herbal bath was advocated.⁷⁹

All these spells could be cast by anyone who knew the secret. However, an essential ingredient to the spell was the evil intent as well as the incantations and alchemical ingredients. Perhaps this was the main difference between the practice of the white witch and the evil witch. They both used charms and spells, magical language and ceremonies. However, only one type sought to cause harm. With such a narrow demarcation line between the two groups it became important for healers to stress where their power to heal came from. Most unofficial healers whether they were high magicians with an expertise in astrology and herblore, or simple village cunning folk, attempted to avoid confrontation by maintaining that their cures came from God. To say they came from any other source would have laid them open to the accusation that they were either atheists or their powers were demonic in origin. However, this explanation was not always accepted. There were many writers who did not confine themselves to attacking the more obvious evils of witches who consorted with the devil in order to cast their spells. Of equal, if not more, importance to them was the condemnation of cunning folk. 'They receive their help', said the Puritan minister George Gifford, 'from the devell'.⁸⁰ For the Puritan divine, John Gaule, there was little distinction between the good witch and the bad. 'Rather, that the accounted Good Witch, is indeed the worse and more wicked of the two. For as Satan, being a Fiend of darkness is then worst when hee transformes himselfe into an

⁷⁹ BL, Sloane MSS 1783, f. 73.

⁸⁰ G. Gifford, *A Dialogue*, sg. C4.

Angel of Light: so likewise are his Ministers'.⁸¹ The witch-finder, John Stearne, not surprisingly was more vitriolic in his opinion of cunning folk, believing that all witches were bad, be they good or evil, and ought to suffer alike. 'And therefore I conclude, all that be in open league with the Devill ought to die'.⁸² There was no difference as far as Stearne was concerned between charmers, cunning folk or astrologers and witches:

To these likewise might be added, those observers of times, Deut 18. And such as professe to cure diseases, by such means as have no reason, or worke of nature to doe the Cure, nor have by any ordinance of God, from his word, any such operation to heale the infirmity. And therefore such remedies must be Diabolicall, & the practisers either Witches already, or by their implicit faith, the next doore to witchcraft.⁸³

During the second half of the seventeenth century faith and belief in miracles became increasingly popular as a means of staving off the fear of atheism. Some writers bemoaned the fact that men no longer believed that the miracles performed before the coming of Christ were still possible or that faith in God was the chief ingredient to performing a miracle.⁸⁴ The Bible clearly stated that so long as a person had faith then he could perform miracles.⁸⁵ Such views were reinforced by the publication of numerous accounts during the 1650s and 1660s of apparent miraculous cures.⁸⁶ In this way alternative healing became tied up not only with faith in God but also with belief in miracles, because without such a belief the cure was not thought to work. As a result of these arguments it was increasingly seen that in order for a healer to be successful it was first necessary for the recipient to be persuaded that the treatment would work:

For we must perswade the sick parties that they shall recover, though he himselfe may have no hope, for Galen saith in his Prognostics, that a

⁸¹ J. Gaule, *Select Case of Conscience*, pp. 30-31.

⁸² J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 8.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 25.

⁸⁴ W. W. Philosophus, *Occult Physick*, p. 124.

⁸⁵ Mat. 17:20; Lu. 17:6.

⁸⁶ V. Greatrakes, *A brief account*, pp. 30-1; BL, TT E 999 (4), *The good Angell of Stamford, or an extraordinary Cure of an extraordinary consumption* (London, 1659), p. 11; G. Fox, *Book of Miracles*, ed. J. Cadbury (Cambridge, 1948), pp. 10-13.

good confidence, and hope, are more efficacious than the Medicine it self, for he cures most, in whom men put most confidence.⁸⁷

Although this point had been made earlier in the seventeenth century, the difference was that then the faith of the patient was believed to have been in the devil rather than God. James argued in his *Daemonologie*, 'neither is it able to them to use anie false cure upon a patient, except the patient first believe in their power, and so hazzard the tinsell of his soul'.⁸⁸ In 1590, Henry Boguet had condemned the belief that the witch could heal. He thought any such healing was entirely due to Satan and it was necessary 'to believe firmly that the witch will cure you, or you will never recover your health; for it is always necessary for the sick man to have complete faith in his doctor'. In other words, faith and belief in the healer was an intricate part of the healing process, even if the healer was an authorised physician. For Boguet 'all the witch's brews and remedies are useless without it'.⁸⁹ Richard Bernard also noted that 'These witches profess that they cannot heal such as do not believe in them'.⁹⁰ Gifford also recognised the power of the imagination. If 'Imagination is a strong thing to hurt ... why should it not then be strong also to helpe, when the parties mind is cheared, by believing fully that he receiveth ease'.⁹¹

One method of ensuring faith in the healer by the patient was to instil a sense of mystery in the cure. To this extent secrecy was a common feature in effecting cures with a charm. In addition, cunning folk were familiar with the principles of the placebo and this has resulted in one historian drawing the parallel between the benefits of our own brightly coloured pills of today and the coloured, noxious potions of the seventeenth century.⁹² A written charm could be given to a patient but they did not

⁸⁷ W. W. Philosophus, *Occult Physick*, p. 132.

⁸⁸ James VI, *Daemonologie*, p. 50.

⁸⁹ H. Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, p. 101.

⁹⁰ R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen*, p. 139.

⁹¹ G. Gifford, *A Dialogue*, sg. C4.

⁹² C. Larnier, 'Healing in Pre-Industrial Britain' unpub. paper (March 1976), University of Glasgow, p. 8, points out: 'The contemporary giant red pill to be taken three times a day before meals - looking as different as possible from aspirin - had its parallel in highly coloured noxious potions, long lasting rituals, arduousness of performance'.

necessarily need to know what the words written on it actually meant for it to work. The important thing was to believe it would work. Gifford in his *Dialogue concerning Witches* (1603), related how a woman from Germany sought treatment for her 'bleare eyes that were watery'. A man lodging at her house promised to heal her and provided her with a written charm that she was to hang from her neck which she was instructed never to remove or read. Such was her confidence in this charm, she ceased her continual crying and her eyes improved. However, she later lost the charm and was in such sorrow that her eyes grew worse again. 'Another found the writing, opened it, and read it. It was written in the German tongue, to this effect translated into English: *The divell plucke out thine eyes, and fil their holes with dung*. Was not this, thinke you, a proper salve for to cure her eyes?'⁹³

This reasoning could then be used to justify the use of magic. For it followed that if the healer could assist the patient's mind, through some incantation or charm worn around the neck, then the body would be helped as well. Moreover, if a medicine was added to this treatment - herbs or a potion - then the body would be helped by the medicine and the mind by the incantation, which if used together would obviously quicken the recovery. Thus charms might be used, not because they possessed any supernatural qualities, but because they assisted the mind of the patient in believing they would be healed. This followed the arguments of Paracelsus who, when talking about alchemical preparations to cure disease, believed the magician's imagination was an essential force in his practice.⁹⁴ In this way official healing could be combined with unofficial healing in a way that was perfectly acceptable to most people. It was also this reasoning which helped to explain why children were often unable to be cured by such means, for they did not possess the imagination adults had. Therefore when healing children it was only possible to cure the body, because in such cases charms could not be used, thereby causing the healer to resort instead to

⁹³ G. Gifford, *A Dialogue*, sg. D. This same example was repeated in J. Cotta, *A short Discoverie*, pp. 59-50 and A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, p. 71.

⁹⁴ F. Hartman, *The Life and Prophecies of Paracelsus* (London, 1973), p. 102.

herblore and astrology. The importance of this thinking meant charmers and cunning folk could operate freely because they could claim the patient was healed by God, and they were merely assisting the patient into believing they would be healed.

If learned men recognised that illness could be cured through the imagination, they also understood that certain illnesses could be caused by the imagination. For many people the condition of melancholy was believed to make a person more prone to certain ailments, and, in extreme cases, could result in death. The physician Richard Napier often included 'grief' in the lists of symptoms of his patients, sometimes for the death of a relation months or even years previously. According to one detailed analysis of Dr Napier's records, grief was manifested as a symptom in 13.2% of his consultations.⁹⁵ In addition, the *Bills of Mortality* for London between 1647 and 1659 list 222 recorded deaths from 'grief'.⁹⁶ Finally it was widely believed that grief could send people mad.⁹⁷ Such beliefs survive right up to modern times. As late as 1925 people believed that disease could be caused by grief. In a letter to the Norfolk GP and antiquarian, Dr Taylor, mention is made of an old Welsh woman who 'was firmly convinced that jaundice was due to grief'.⁹⁸

One of the reasons such explanations to illness were used in the seventeenth century is that diagnoses were nearly always based on the external symptoms the patient displayed immediately prior to their death. During the mid seventeenth century the cause of death was determined by specially appointed groups of women known as 'searchers', whose job it was to examine the corpse and determine the cause of death. In doing this they often merely described what the corpse looked like or blamed the death on the visible symptoms prior to the death. In the *London Bills of Mortality* between 1630 and 1660 we find such diverse causes as 'Aged, Convulsion,

⁹⁵ M. Macdonald, *Mystical Bedlam* (Cambridge, 1981), Appendix E., pp. 247-53.

⁹⁶ J. Graunt, *Natural and Political Observations Mentioned in a following Index, and made upon the Bills of Mortality* (London, 1662).

⁹⁷ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, pp. 331-2.

⁹⁸ NRO MSS 4412, Taylor papers, f. 126.

Headache, Itch, Lethargy, Vomiting, Suddenly'.⁹⁹ In other words the last symptom displayed before the death of the victim usually provided the explanation for his or her demise. Significantly, there are no entries mentioning the cause of death as witchcraft. This would suggest the diagnosis of witchcraft, at the official level at least, could only be made by a physician. It could also be because witchcraft was a cause, not a symptom. A person may have been bewitched then suffered from some outward manifestation of the bewitchment - convulsions, lameness or languishing - which were then given as a cause of death. This may help to explain why so many unofficial medical practitioners, such as cunning folk and white witches, fell foul of the authorities, as they were effectively undermining the authority of the physician by commenting on what had caused the visible symptoms of the afflicted person, instead of merely describing the visible symptoms of the afflicted, which was all they were officially qualified to do. This laid them open to the obvious question, how did they know that the victim was bewitched if they were not a qualified physician? Either they had personal knowledge of the ailment because they had caused the bewitchment, or they had gained this knowledge, like the witch, from the devil. It also demonstrated that the ailments caused by witchcraft were not in themselves thought to be supernatural, instead they were normal illnesses which had been caused by bewitchment. If the actual disease or illness had been recognised by the official authorities as supernatural or bewitchment, then it would have been shown in the *Bills of Mortality*. It is true that one does see an entry for the 'King's Evil', but this was not thought to be a supernatural illness. Rather it was a genuine affliction which had a supernatural cure.¹⁰⁰

The fear of illness was also recognised as a *prima facie* cause of disease. According to the Benedictine monk, Dom Augustine Calmet (b.1672), 'As soon as a man finds himself attacked with the least illness, he fancies that he is seized with the epidemical disease [plague]'. As a result it was 'almost impossible for the system to

⁹⁹ J. Graunt, *Bills of Mortality*.

¹⁰⁰ Scrofula, an inflammation of the Lymph glands.

resist such a revolution'. When Calmet was in Paris he was told by the Chevalier de Maisin 'that being in Marseilles during the contagion which prevailed in that city, he had seen a woman die of the fear she felt at a slight illness of her servant, who she believed attacked with the pestilence'.¹⁰¹ Moreover, in the London *Bills of Mortality* there were 21 people listed as dying of fear.¹⁰²

If all this was the case then surely one could suppose many cases of witchcraft were psychosomatic in origin. Certainly the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Richard Burton, believed that the commonest malady caused by witchcraft was melancholy:

Paracelsus in express words affirms: many are bewitched into melancholy, out of his experience. The same, saith Danaeus: I have seen those that have caused melancholy in the most grievous manner, *dried up women's paps, cured gout, palsy, this and apoplexy, falling sickness, which no physick could help, by touch alone.*

The cure for such maladies was generally unknown, because there was little known about the causes of the actual disease in the first place. Because of this, as in so many other cases where learned men were unable to explain something, the explanation often revolved around the supernatural. Moreover, if the cause was supernatural then it followed that a cure could be effected through the supernatural. Richard Burton was perfectly clear that the devil could cure by unknown means, and therefore it followed that the magician could also cure because his power came from the devil. 'Many famous cures are daily done in this kind, the Devil is an expert Physician ... and God permits oftentimes these Witches and Magicians to produce such effects'.¹⁰³

In the same way unofficial healers thought charms could assist in the healing process, because they helped to convince the patient that the remedy would work; some physicians also recognised that belief in the supernatural could actually aid their cures. Denis Granville, the Dean of Durham from 1684 to 1689, told of the positive effects that a combination of practical and magical healing could have on a patient. A

¹⁰¹ D. A. Calmet, *Treatise on vampires & revenants*, ed. C. Leatherdale (Desert Island Books, 1993), p. 57.

¹⁰² J. Graunt, *Bills of Mortality*.

¹⁰³ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, pp. 178, 383.

French doctor had a patient who was convinced he was possessed by the Devil. The doctor called a priest and a surgeon, and in the mean time purloined a small bat which he placed in a bag. The priest offered a prayer to the victim and the surgeon made a small cut in his side. Just as the cut was made, the doctor let the bat fly into the room, crying 'Behold, there the devil is gone'. The man believed it and was cured.¹⁰⁴ In such an example practically all aspects of seventeenth century healing are involved: the official physician, the unofficial surgeon and the demonic.¹⁰⁵ One of the major differences between early-modern times and today, was the recognition people had of what we would now call psychosomatic illness and the cures necessary for it. Today, despite hypochondria and psychosomatic illnesses being recognised by most physicians, psychosomatic treatment for such illnesses is not. By contrast, in the seventeenth century, whether an illness was believed to be supernatural or not there were many medical diagnoses and cures which relied on magical or supernatural remedies, even amongst learned physicians, because it was recognised such remedies possessed a genuine cathartic effect.

Perhaps of equal importance, an accusation of witchcraft could also provide a patient with an explanation for an otherwise unexplainable disease. A study of the casebooks of the physician Richard Napier reveals the most common illness attributed to witchcraft amongst adults was disturbances of the mind. After this were fits and swooning. This was particularly the case with children.¹⁰⁶ Although these ailments were the least explainable in medical terms, they at least provided the patient with a positive course of action by which he or she could deal with the ailment. The explanation that a person was bewitched provided an element of rationality enabling the patient to be cured, for now he or she had only to seek out the witch and have the

¹⁰⁴ Cited in K. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 249-30.

¹⁰⁵ This ties in well with the findings of Judith Newman, who in her study of insanity in medieval Europe, discovered similar combinations of physical and magical healing methods amongst medieval physicians. J. Newman, *Suggestion of the devil. Insanity in the middle ages and the twentieth century* (New York, 1978), pp. 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ R. Sawyer, "'Strangely handled in all her lyms": Witchcraft and healing in Jacobean England', *Journal of Social History* (Spring, 1989), vol. xxii, no. 3, 461-486, p. 486.

spell removed. Often the remedies employed to deal with bewitchment were ceremonial in nature and thus mirrored the advice of the church that prayer and fasting were the only answer. In other cases such ceremonies replaced those officially sanctioned in Catholic countries, such as exorcisms, or those unofficially used by healers in Protestant lands. Patients might seek to reconcile themselves with the suspected witch or they might seek retribution. According to one recent historian, 'Witchcraft accusations thus offered a wider range of action, a wider sphere where healing could be sought and perhaps found for perplexing diseases'.¹⁰⁷

Another illustration of the faith people had in psychosomatic cures can be seen in the popularity of faith-healers or strokers. Perhaps the most famous manifestation of this could be seen in the curing of *Scrofula*, or the King's Evil, by the King's touch. Just how popular this feeling was illustrated by the large numbers of people who flocked to be touched by the King after the Restoration. Charles II is known to have ministered to over 90,000 persons in the 20 years 1660-64 and 1667-83.¹⁰⁸ In 1665 the huge numbers of people coming to be stroked by the King was sufficient to give great cause for concern amongst some of London's physicians. One surgeon, Richard Pile, proposed that the 'King's Physicians & Chirurgeons' should be ordered to consult and determine what diseases should be 'fitt to be presented for His Ma[jesty's] touch', and, if they were satisfied to issue a ticket. Moreover, in order to prevent repeated visits by the same patient, the Bishop of London was ordered to send a receipt containing the details of each one touched, verified with the Bishop's seal, to the surgeons office, so that they could be compared with the other certificates given to their Parishioners in order to ensure that none was touched more than once. In addition they were to keep a register of the certificates they had issued.¹⁰⁹ Such

¹⁰⁷ R. Sawyer, "'Strangely handled in all her lym's": Witchcraft and healing in Jacobean England', *Journal of Social History* (Spring, 1989), vol. xxii, no. 3, 461-486, p. 471.

¹⁰⁸ K. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁹ Wellcome, MSS 627/628, R. Pile, 'Proposal for the better ordering People to be touched by His Majestie for the [King's] Evill' (c.1665), f. 55.

bureaucracy is indicative of the fear by many physicians at the undermining of their medical authority by a ritual many must have felt was superstitious nonsense.

Of course scrofula was a disease that lent itself very well to such healing practices for it was periodical in nature.¹¹⁰ Such reasoning led to many healers being accused of being mere charlatans. Some thought their remedies totally unnecessary because many of the illnesses they purported to heal would heal naturally anyway. This was recognised by Henry Stubbe in 1666 when he was writing about the celebrated healer Valentine Greatrakes. He theorised that although Greatrakes did have the power to heal, it was only in the sense that he was setting in motion the natural healing process.

This being done it is Nature Cures the Diseases and distempers and infirmities, it is Nature makes them fly up and down the Body so as they do: they avoyd not his hand, but his touch and stroke so Invigorateth the parts that they reject the Heterogeneous Ferment, 'till it be outed the Body at some of those parts he is thought to stroke it out thereof.¹¹¹

The cure of the King's Evil by the reigning monarch could also provide a useful propaganda tool. In 1643 a pamphlet in the form of a petition lamented 'the desertion of the City of London' by the King, leaving hundreds of victims of the King's Evil without any hope of a cure. The correlation between the sick and the sickness of the kingdom was made obvious:

as for the recovery of the State, which hath languished of a tedious sicknesse since your Highness departure from thence, and can no more be cured of its infirmities then wee, till your gracious returne thither, which, that is may be sooner be effected, wee your Majesties, loyall Subjects and humble Petitioners, shall ever pray.¹¹²

The cure by royal touch was thus seen as a metaphor for the state of the kingdom, by signifying normality. If the King could resume his normal duties then all would be well again. This is further demonstrated by the propaganda use of healing by royal touch in order to legitimise the claim by the rightful heir to the throne. In the summer

¹¹⁰ Keith Thomas has pointed out that the disease naturally declines with time, K. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 243.

¹¹¹ H. Stubbe, *The Miraculous Conformist* (Oxford, 1666), p. 14.

¹¹² *To the Kings most Excellent Majesty* (London, 1643).

of 1680 when the Duke of Monmouth went to the west country to gain support for his cause he is known to have touched for the King's evil. Also in the autumn of 1682 he did the same in the north west of England.¹¹³

The true importance of such extracts is the demonstration of the widespread belief prevalent amongst the population in miraculous healing. The language used by those who sought to exploit such beliefs for propaganda purposes could not have been effectively achieved without the commensurate belief in the first place. To this end the importance of such evidence is not the debate that was going on concerning the legitimacy of unofficial healers, but in the demonstration of the widespread use and credence given to such practices. Thus, like the belief in the devil, there seems to be a two-tiered belief. On the one hand the intellectual élite, keen to maintain the monopoly of Galenic principles in healing, denounced all form of unofficial healing as demonic; on the other hand, there was also a recognition that such beliefs were not likely to go away and therefore since it was impossible to eradicate them one might just as well use them for one's own purpose. In this way magical beliefs based on sympathetic principles could become legitimised through reasoned argument that included the importance of God in the healing process. It was only those who omitted this vital ingredient who found themselves being accused of witchcraft.

¹¹³ B. Sharp, 'Popular Political opinion in England, 1660-1685', *History of European Ideas*, vol. x, No 1 (1989), p. 20.

CHAPTER 5

Witchcraft, Law and Popular Belief

During the seventeenth century there existed a basic conflict between the popular understanding of witchcraft, and the legal explanation. Despite there being a legal definition of witchcraft, many pre-conceived notions still existed at the popular level about its nature which proved almost impossible to eradicate. While it may be true that the first 40 years of the seventeenth century saw many popular notions concerning witchcraft challenged both by the courts and by the élite, the general social upheaval caused by the civil war resulted in a re-emergence of a general belief amongst the populace in witchcraft. In this chapter it is intended to offer some explanations why this was so. In addition it will be demonstrated that in practice it was often difficult for the legal authorities to ignore such superstitious beliefs.

From 1542, with the advent of the first statute against witchcraft, the secular authorities came to have an increasing role in dealing with such crimes. However, it was the 1604 Witchcraft Act which changed the nature of the offence. In addition to the existing offences of harming or killing another by witchcraft, the new Act made it a felony to consult with an evil spirit. The wording of the Act was quite clear on this matter. It was illegal for any person to

use practise or exercise any Invocation or Conjuratiō of any evill and wicked Spirit, or shall consult covenant with entertaine employ feede or rewarde any evill and wicked Spirit to or for any intent or purpose ... that then everie such offender or offenders, their Ayders Abettors and Counsellors, being of any the saide Offences dūlie and lawfullie convicted and attainted, shall suffer pains of deathe as a Felon or Felons, and shall loose the priviledge and benefit of Cleargie and Sanctuarie.¹

As a result it was possible to secure a conviction for witchcraft and impose the death penalty, when no act of *maleficia* had been committed by the alleged witch. This was because the 1604 Act made it a felony to enter into a contract with the devil. The only

¹ *Statutes of the Realm* (London, 1810), vol. iv, pt. ii, p. 1028.

proof necessary was that the witch had made a pact with the Devil or consulted with the Devil in the form of a familiar spirit.

All this may at first seem relatively clear and straightforward. But in practice most allegations had more complex origins. The legislation defining the offence of witchcraft, focusing around the proving of a contract with the devil, often contrasted sharply with the commonly held belief that the evidence required to secure a conviction for witchcraft lay with proving a suspected witch had bewitched another. During the seventeenth century there was much conflict between these two points of view. Frequently witnesses in their depositions at witchcraft trials asserted that the accused witch had been the cause of the harm to themselves or close relatives. In such cases the accused had been merely perceived as a witch and there was often no reference to a compact. Despite the crudeness of these suspicions many of the indictments for witchcraft took these forms. For most people dealing with the *maleficium* was more important than proving a contract with the devil. Instead this latter factor was usually left to the prosecutor, or the interrogator. As a result, information that a witch had teats from which her familiar sucked, probably deriving from the Continental belief in the witch's mark, was often merely subsidiary to the main charge. That the devil appeared as an animal was also (as we have seen) rooted in popular belief. Three possible motives emerge for witchcraft allegations: a personal desire to remove an evil influence doing harm to the accuser; a desire for gain; or an expression of religious zeal - a wish to eradicate the followers of the devil from the land.

The secularisation of the offence of witchcraft, especially after 1604, may account for the clergy's criticism of the judicial process. Several tracts condemning the prosecution of witches for acts of *maleficium* were written by divines during this period.² It is important to stress, however, that they were not attacking the belief in witches, but the judicial process which they felt to be fundamentally flawed, relying as

² Examples include: John Gaule, divine and vicar of Great Staughton Huntingdonshire, the Puritan preacher, William Perkins and the divine, George Gifford.

it did on a jury consisting in the main of uneducated, ignorant, country folk. The Puritan John Gaule wished that 'these Twelve good men and True, were not impanelled of ordinary Country people: but of the most Eminent Physitians, Lawyers and Divines, that a County could afford'. In addition, while he was quite clear in his belief there were witches, he was careful to disassociate himself from the popular superstition that often led to widespread accusations of witchcraft:

there are also a sect or sort, that ... conclude peremptorily (not from reason, but indiscretion) that witches not only are, but are in every place, and Parish with them, every old woman with a wrinkled face, a furr'd brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voyce, or a scolding tongue, having a rugged coate on her back, a skull cap on her head, a spindle in her hand, and a Dog or Cat by her side; is not only suspected, but pronounced for a witch.³

Alexander Roberts, in 1616, had also pointed out that the stereotype of a witch as an elderly woman was false:

all who are convented upon these unlawfull actions, are not stricken in yeares; but some even in the flower of their youth be misled up in the same, and convicted to be practisers thereof; neither be they overflowed with a blacke melancholique humor, dazeling the phantasie, but have their understanding cleer, and wits as quick as others.⁴

One of the paradoxes of witchcraft legislation was the absence of a strict definition of what a witch actually was. While it was true the offence of witchcraft was defined, there was nothing to say how one could prove a person was a witch. Not surprisingly, therefore, the definition varied greatly. George Gifford thought

A witch is one that woorketh by the Devill, or by some devilish or curious art, either hurting or healing, revealing things secrete, or foretelling thinges to come, which the devil hath devised to entangle and snare mens soules withal unto damnation. The conjurer, the enchanter, the sorcerer, the deviner, and whatsoever other sort there is, are in deede compassed within this circle.⁵

For the political writer Sir Robert Filmer, the biblical passage 'Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live',⁶ meant that one was not to relieve or maintain a witch by running after

³ J. Gaule, *Select cases of conscience*, pp. 194-5.

⁴ A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, pp. 4, 5.

⁵ G. Gifford, *Discourse*, sg. Bii.

⁶ Exod. 22:18.

her and rewarding her.⁷ Thomas Ady, on the other hand, pointed out there were only two occasions that the word 'witch' was mentioned in the Bible (Exod. 22:18, Deut. 18:10) and in each of these passages the reference was to idolaters. 'A witch is a Man, or Woman, that practiseth Devillish crafts, of seducing the people for gain, from the knowledge and worship of God, and from the truth to vain credulity (or believing of lyes) or to worshipping of idols'.⁸

An additional problem brought about by the absence of a clear legal definition of a witch was that many would have had their own definition based either on superstitious beliefs, folklore or even hearsay. Thus the way was left open for accusations based on stereotypical accounts of what was commonly believed to be a witch. Often, as we have seen,⁹ the appearance or dress of a person was sufficient for an accusation. In other cases the anti-social behaviour or evil reputation of a suspect could result in him or her being branded a witch.¹⁰ As a result of this confusion several writers offered guidance on the best way of detecting witches. Equally there were many who sought to attack them. While demonologists concentrated on the intellectual arguments surrounding the existence, power and nature of the devil, others proffered more practical advice concerning the evidence necessary to convict a witch in court. Perhaps the most popular demonstration of the connection between folklore and the legal requirements necessary to convict a witch was outlined by James VI in his *Daemonologie*. He asserted there were two ways to prove a witch in law: firstly, the finding of their mark, and secondly, their rejection by water.¹¹ However, despite his claims, neither of these methods were laid down in law: they were not mentioned in the legislation and they failed to demonstrate the necessary demonic compact. At best such evidence was circumstantial as it might be deduced the marks were caused

⁷ R. Filmer, *Advertisement to the jurymen of England touching Witches. Together with a difference between an English and Hebrew witch* (London, 1653), p. 23.

⁸ T. Ady, *A candle in the Dark*, pp. 9-12.

⁹ See above, p. 36.

¹⁰ See Chp. 7 for examples of the psychological implications of this.

¹¹ James VI, *Daemonologie*, p. 80.

by the suckling of the familiar, which had in turn been granted to the witch after making a contract with the devil. But in effect such advice remained procedural with no legal basis. Similarly the belief that a witch would not sink in water was based on the theological argument that water, being the element of baptism, would reject evil. Again, this is not mentioned in the legislation, nor does it seem to have been mentioned as a method to detect witches in earlier demonological works. It was absent from *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487), for example, and also Jean Bodin's *On the demonic madness of witches* (1581). In fact the first mention of such a procedure seems to have been by James VI, in his *Daemonologie* (1597), with the first recorded use of such a method not being until 15 years later, in 1612 at Northamptonshire.¹² Such advice concerning the detection of witches is perhaps more useful in showing the connection between the methodology of prosecuting a witch and the ancient customs and beliefs of the land. The trial by water probably originated in the ancient common law procedure in which the guilt or innocence of a person was determined through the water ordeal. Strutt in his *Description of the Ordeals under the Saxons*, tells us that

the second kind of ordeal, by water, was, to thrust the accused into a deep water, where, if he struggled in the least to keep himself on the surface, he was accounted guilty; but if he remained on the top of the water without motion, he was acquitted with honour.¹³

Ducking had also been a popular and traditional way of punishing scolds and the use of the village pond for this purpose could easily have been adapted to detect witches.

In the 1640s and 1650s several manuals provided guidance on the discovery of witches. One such pamphlet, *The Lawes against Witchcraft and Conjurat[i]on* (1645), was typical of many appearing during the English Civil War period. It listed 15 points, almost certainly based on the 18 points mentioned by William Perkins in his *Discourse on Witchcraft* in 1608, to prove a person was a witch.¹⁴ Although these

¹² C. Holmes, 'Popular Culture? Witches, Magistrates and Divines in Early Modern England,' in S. L. Kaplan, ed., *Understanding Popular Culture* (London, 1984), p. 104.

¹³ J. Brand, *Popular Antiquities of Great Britain* (London, 1964), vol. iii, p. 75.

¹⁴ W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, pp. 201-3.

were wide-ranging and authoritative none of them are mentioned in the legislation. It was pointed out in the pamphlet that witches had familiar spirits which sucked from a special teat on their body; they employed wax images in their magic; and they were given to cursing and threatening. Typically when apprehended or accused they might say: 'you should have let me alone then', or 'I have not hurt you as yet'. Such threats at the time of the accusation might then be used as evidence of their guilt. Additionally, if a witch diligently enquired after the sick party this was also deemed to be suspicious, especially if he or she called on the victim's home uninvited. It was common too for the sick person to name the suspected witch in his or her fits. The ancient belief that a corpse would bleed in the presence of its murderer seems also to have been extended to include the belief that it would bleed if touched by a witch.¹⁵ The testimony of children that they had been bewitched was also thought to be especially good evidence. If wax images, or other obvious spell components were found in the home of the suspected witch then this was also deemed to be a sign of his or her guilt. Finally, the witch's own confession was thought to be the most important.¹⁶ The detection methods advocated by the writer are all the more surprising given that his work begins with a full transcript of the 1604 Witchcraft Act, stating the objective criteria necessary to convict a witch, and continues with practical advice on how it could be implemented. He expands the statutory definition - 'consult, covenant with, entertain, imploy, feed, or reward any evil and wicked spirit' - to include possession of a familiar spirit, and the existence of teats. In this way the legal definition of witchcraft seems to have been interpreted, not by lawyers, but by writers pandering to the popular beliefs of ordinary folk.

The most useful aspect of such works was not in their demonstration of the type of evidence being accepted by the courts in witchcraft trials, but in their demonstration of the popular notion of what witchcraft was all about. The use of wax images to

¹⁵ James VI, *Daemonologie*, pp. 80-1. For numerous other examples of sources quoting instances of corpses bleeding in the presence of their murderer, vid: K. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 261fn.

¹⁶ BL, TT E 367 (11), *The Lawes against Witches and conjuration*, pp. 4-5.

cause harm, for example, was based on ancient and traditional rules of sympathetic magic. While this may not have proved a witch in law, old beliefs did not die out and accounts of such images being utilised can be found in the testimonies of numerous witnesses. John Stearne mentioned he had been informed by Mathew Hopkins of a suspected witch in Great Yarmouth who had confessed to making a wax image in the shape of a child whom she wished to harm. She did this by thrusting a nail in the image's head and then burying it. As the wax image was gradually consumed, so too would the child. After her confession the image was recovered by Hopkins and the child recovered.¹⁷ John Aubrey also recorded how 'one Hammond of Westminster, was hanged, or tryed for his life about 1641, for killing ... by a figure of wax'.¹⁸ Others, while recognising that witches did use such images, thought they were of little import. William Perkins argued such charms and incantations had no power, but were a further demonstration of the devil deluding his followers into thinking they had power to harm.¹⁹

Other works were more critical of this popular approval. Robert Filmer, for example, in his *Advertisement to the jurymen of England touching Witches* (1653), while not denying the existence of witches, wanted people to be more careful in the evidence they accepted of witchcraft. He pointed out the flaws in Perkins' treatise on witchcraft, arguing that of the 18 signs or proofs mentioned by Perkins there remained only two reliable proofs: the testimony of at least two witnesses and the confession of the suspected witch.²⁰ According to John Stearne, writing in 1648, it made no difference if an act of *maleficia* had been committed or not. The important thing to establish was the compact with the devil, and the witch's mark proved this. He expressed absolute confidence that whoever was found with these marks was expressly guilty of 'that diabolical art or practise of Witchcraft, whether they have

¹⁷ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, pp. 53-4.

¹⁸ J. Aubrey, *Remains of Gentilisme*, pp. 228-9.

¹⁹ W. Perkins, *Discourse of the damned art of witchcraft*, p. 149.

²⁰ R. Filmer, *Advertisement to the jurymen of England*, p. 1.

done any mischief or not, but only for that they have renounced God and Christ, and betaken themselves to the devil, the utter enemy of God and all the world'.²¹ Of course relying on a mark in order to prove a compact with the devil was tendentious to say the least, but it seems to have become an accepted form of evidence despite the criticisms that the witch's mark might have been natural. John Stearne was careful to address this point when he stated that his searchers, employed to look for teats on suspected witches, were able to tell the difference between the mark of Satan and natural marks such as warts.²² Others pointed out that the devil could easily place a mark on a person without their knowledge. The Northamptonshire physician John Cotta felt this was a possibility. He questioned whether it was right that the malice of the devil in having an unknowing victim prosecuted for witchcraft because teats had been discovered on him or her, should be accepted in law. Cotta did not deny that the devil through some covenant could suck the body and blood of witches, 'in witnesse of their homage unto him; but I denie any marke ... [is] sufficient condemnation unto any man'.²³ Thomas Ady, writing in 1655, employed an argument based on the Scriptures in order to attack the absurdity of condemning witches solely because of a mark found on their body. 'Without God was nothing made that was made',²⁴ and he asked 'who then made those Biggs, or Teats, and who made the bodies of those Devils called Imps'.²⁵ Of course biblical evidence could be used on both sides. John Stearne pointed out that the Bible told us it was the devil's custom to mark his disciples, just as God marked his.²⁶

However, it was generally recognised that once a teat had been found on a suspected witch, this would result in him or her confessing - the best possible proof of guilt of a suspected witch. John Stearne observed that once the mark had been found

²¹ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 48.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²³ J. Cotta, *A Short Discoverie*, pp. 57-8.

²⁴ John 1:3.

²⁵ T. Ady, *A Candle in the Dark*, p. 99.

²⁶ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 42 (citing: Ezek. 9; Rev. 7).

by the searcher, the confession soon followed. In Suffolk, he described how a woman was searched after being released earlier: 'there was alteration of the markes, and the woman presently confessed it, and made a large confession; and so it hath been common in all our proceedings, and a great cause for keeping them'.²⁷ Without doubt such beliefs had such a strong hold on public imagination that once a mark had been found, the suspected witch may have realised he or she was doomed and confessed anyway. In this way many innocent people may have genuinely believed they were witches after such marks were found.

One indication of how seriously this method of detection was taken by ordinary people was the steps taken by some to remove any incriminating marks before a search. This was often reported by contemporaries and subsequently used as evidence of a suspected witch's guilt. One suspected witch, Marian Hockes, was said to have 'cut off her bigs, [teats] whereby she might have been more suspected to have been a witch, and laid plaisters to those places'.²⁸ When the Northamptonshire tailor, John Browne, was giving evidence in May 1646 against some suspected witches, he deposed that he had struck up a conversation with one 'Clarke's son of Keiston' who had told him that he was in haste because his mother had been accused of witchcraft and that he had been searched for marks. The informant told the man he had also been searched and some marks found. Clarke then told him: 'but had you no more wit but to have your marks found? I cut off mine three days before I was searched'.²⁹ John Stearne also pointed out it was common for people to attempt to deceive the searchers by removing their marks, but that such deceptions could still be discerned by a skilled searcher.³⁰ These examples also demonstrate that such knowledge of witch finding techniques was not merely confined to the educated élite; instead it appears to have been a common belief among those who were themselves accused of witchcraft. Thus

²⁷ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 17.

²⁸ BL, TT E 296 (35), *A true and exact Relation of the Severall Informations*, p. 28.

²⁹ BL, TT E 343 (10), *The Witches of Huntingdon*, p. 15.

³⁰ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 46.

it seems that pacts with the devil and the possession of familiar spirits appear to have become enshrined in local village folklore as much as fear of malevolent behaviour by a suspected witch.

However, it was often not enough to simply report a suspected witch had teats on his or her body. The testimony had to include an opinion or evidence as to their purpose and their supernatural nature, and to this extent they were often reported to have some unusual quality, in other words, as different from a natural mark as possible. The supernatural attributes of the witch's teat were often reflected by reporting either the unnatural shape of the teat, or the speed in which it grew. When the suspected witch Ellen Caryson was searched by Ann Morise at Ely in 1647, on the first searching she discovered two teats, but on the second search the next day she found three teats which were much bigger than they were the day before. A midwife, Anne Clarke, also testified that in her experience these marks were not natural.³¹ When Elizabeth Crab was required to search Ann Green, she testified she found three long teats the like of which she had not seen on any other woman. When Marie Gammon searched Elizabeth Foot, she also found two teats, one of which was abnormally large, and again she testified she had seen nothing like it on any other woman.³² The searchers Annie Gotolen, Alice Hayward, Jane Hopkins, Ellen Granter and Marie Salmon all testified that Jane Salter had three teates, one bigger than the other 'being neere her privy parts which the midwife & the rest of these informants have not seen the like on the body of any woman'.³³ John Stearne too in his testimony to the Ely Assizes, stressed the unnatural shape of the marks that he discovered on the suspected witches. When he searched the body of Robert Ellis, he found 4 'teates upon the entrance to his fundaments & such teates of so great a bignes' that he had seldom seen on the body of any he had formerly searched. As a result he was

³¹ CUL, MS E/12, f. 1.

³² Ibid., ff. 4, 10.

³³ Ibid., f. 20.

convinced these 'teats' were 'suckt by evill spirits'.³⁴ Likewise, when Stearne testified to finding two marks on the body of Thomas Pye, on 24 July 1647, he pointed out the marks were not natural as they were similar to the marks found on others who had confessed to being witches. When he searched Adam Sabie, he found 'at the entrance to his fundament ... one teate of the greatest length that he ever sawe upon the body of any man that hath by their own Confession been witches or wizards'.³⁵

One of the reasons the searchers stressed the unnatural size and shape of such marks was because it was important to differentiate them from natural marks. Also it was necessary to pre-empt any possible defence on the part of the suspected witch, that they were natural marks. Explanations from those accused of possessing such marks were wide ranging. Jane Salter, in 1647, told the Ely Justices that she believed the marks discovered on her body had been caused by child bearing. Jane Briggs said the teates found on her body were nothing more than warts. Robert Ellis explained the 4 teates found on his body had been caused by great labour during his youth.³⁶ Hopkins had himself been challenged on the issue of differentiating the mark of Satan from normal marks. In his *Discovery of Witches*, he addressed this point and argued that those who searched the suspected witches could tell the difference. He pointed out that 'commonly a dozen of the ablest men in the parish or elsewhere, were present, and most commonly as many ancient skillful matrons and midwives present when the women are tryed'.³⁷ However, in stating this he does appear to be exaggerating, for although many who were recruited to search witches were 'ancient skillful matrons', few are mentioned as having been midwives. Nevertheless, during the trials held at Ely in 1647, there is mention of at least two midwives being present during the searching of suspected witches and the presence of such professional witnesses would have undoubtedly bolstered the reliability of the prosecution case.³⁸ In order to

³⁴ CUL, MS E/12, f. 18.

³⁵ Ibid., ff. 17, 21.

³⁶ Ibid., ff. 10, 15, 18.

³⁷ M. Hopkins, *Discovery*, pp. 3-4.

³⁸ CUL, MS E/12, f. 20.

differentiate the witch's mark from natural marks, Hopkins explained that there were three main differences: firstly, by their position on the body, secondly their insensibility and finally that they were 'often charged'. If a suspected witch was kept alone for 24 hours then the teat would grow and be 'full of corruption ready to burst' because the imp had not sucked on it.³⁹

In such cases the role of the searchers whose job it was to locate the witch's mark was paramount. However, as has been pointed out by James Oldham, it would be a mistake to view the searchers as part of the same judicial process which empanelled juries of women to determine pregnancy. The procedure with regard to witches was not strictly comparable because it was essentially a pre-trial procedure - in effect part of the investigative process.⁴⁰ Such pre-trial procedures also help to explain the preponderance of women appearing as witnesses in trials.⁴¹ Because most of the accused witches were women they had to be searched by a woman. We know this because on the occasions when suspected male witches were accused they were always searched by men. Whilst investigating witches at Ely in 1647 John Stearne, Thomas Hitch and Rowland Taylor all searched the body of the suspected witch Robert Ellis for teats. In addition John Stearne searched the bodies of Adam Sabie and Thomas Pye. None of these male witches were searched by women, neither did any of these searchers examine the bodies of any female witches.⁴² Thus the preponderance of female witnesses in witchcraft trials seems to have been a procedural matter rather than being reliant on any gender issue.

Although the use of torture was not officially sanctioned, except for cases of treason, we know that during the 1640s Mathew Hopkins was able to employ sleep deprivation techniques against his suspects. Moreover, this was apparently done with the connivance of the local justices. In 1647 Hopkins described how, 'In the infancy

³⁹ M. Hopkins, *Discovery*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁰ J. C. Oldham, 'On pleading the Belly: a history of the Jury of Matrons', *Criminal Justice History*, 6 (1985), p. 9.

⁴¹ C. Holmes, 'Women: Witnesses and Witches', *Past and Present*, 140 (August 1993), p. 48.

⁴² CUL, MS E/12, ff. 17, 18, 21.

of this discovery it was not only thought fitting, but enjoyed in Essex and Suffolke by the Magistrates, with this intention only, because they being kept awake would be more the active to call their Imps in open view the sooner to their helpe'.⁴³ However, Hopkins did not describe the methods he employed. For this it is necessary to read the accounts of his critics. John Gaule described how suspected witches, in order to keep them awake, were placed on a stool in the middle of a room and watched for 24 hours without food or sleep to see if their imps came.⁴⁴ For Ady the treatment of suspected witches was

one of the most devillish cruelties that hath been devised among men, and that is, to keep the poor accused party from sleep many nights and days, thereby to distemper their brains, and hurt their fancies, at length to extort confession as evidence against them; and if they cannot make them confess, they torture one of their little children to make it accuse their parents, and that they call their confession, this trick will tame any wilde beast, and make it tractable, or any wilde Hawk, and make it tame.⁴⁵

Perhaps the most criticised method of detecting witches was the water ordeal. Such criticism was especially prevalent following the execution of the staunchly royalist octogenarian clergyman, John Lowes, who had been the vicar at Brandeston Suffolk, for 50 years.⁴⁶ He had been accused of witchcraft more than once, and finally this was confirmed when he was swum in the castle moat at Framlingham and found to float. His interrogation whilst undergoing sleep deprivation is particularly horrific especially when one considers his age. The eighteenth-century witchcraft historian, Francis Hutchinson (1660-1739), described how Hopkins kept him awake for several nights and then ran him about the room until he was out of breath, 'then they rested him a little, and then ran him again: And thus they did for several days and Nights together, till he was weary of his life, and was scarce sensible of what he said or did'.⁴⁷ Moreover, the same author pointed out that his swimming at Framlingham was 'no

⁴³ M. Hopkins, *Discovery*, p. 5.

⁴⁴ J. Gaule, *Select cases of conscience*, p. 77.

⁴⁵ T. Ady, *A candle in the Dark*, p. 99.

⁴⁶ For an account of this episode vid: C. E. Ewen, *The Trial of John Lowes, Clerk* (London, 1937), passim.

⁴⁷ F. Hutchinson, *An historical Essay concerning Witchcraft* (London, 1718), p. 68.

true rule to try him by; for they put in honest people at the Same Time, and they swam as well as he'.⁴⁸ Ady also mentioned this case when he criticised the use of the water ordeal in his treatise:

these delusions have been impiously acted here in England, of late in Essex, and Suffolk, by a wicked Inquisitor pretending authority for it, to the cutting off of fourteen innocent people at Chelmsford Assizes, and about an hundred at Berry Assizes, whereof one was a Minister neer Framlingham, of about fourscore years age, wherein this Inquisitor hath laid such a president for the Popes Inquisition ... as would not easily be removed.⁴⁹

For Ady these methods amounted to nothing more than a papist trick. For him the anti-Christ in Rome was attempting to subvert the English church through the doctrine of witchcraft. In this sense then the actual witch finder was a party to the anti-Christ, as he was the tool that would lead to the downfall of the only true church. Such arguments may have led to the accusation that Mathew Hopkins was himself a witch working in league with the devil. In his own treatise Hopkins admits that he had been accused of being 'the greatest Witch, sorcerer, and Wizzard himselfe, else he could not do it'. When challenged that he must have met with the devil 'and cheated him of his Books, wherein were written all the witches names in England ... so by this, his helpe is from the Devill', he replied 'If he had been too hard for the devill and got his book, it had been to his great commendation, and no disgrace at all: and for judgements in phisiognomie, he hath no more then any man whatsoever'.⁵⁰ However, there is no evidence that Hopkins was proceeded against as a witch. Instead it seems likely that such criticisms were directed at him because, like witches, many may have felt he was in league with the devil or the 'anti-Christ in Rome'.

Apart from the Hopkins witch hunt between 1645-7, there is little evidence of the involvement of any other full time witch hunter in England. There are of course a few notable exceptions, but it seems that in general the Hopkins witch hunt was an isolated incident brought about by the peculiar circumstances present during the

⁴⁸ F. Hutchinson, *An historical Essay concerning Witchcraft* (London, 1718), p. 68.

⁴⁹ T. Ady, *A candle in the dark*, pp. 101-2.

⁵⁰ M. Hopkins, *Discovery*, p. 1.

English Civil War. One such example was of a witch hunt sponsored by the corporations of Berwick and Newcastle in 1649-50, who agreed to pay the expenses of a witch hunter. The town crier of Newcastle had been sent out crying 'all people that would bring in any woman for a Witch, they should be sent for and tryed by the person appointed'. This example demonstrates how arbitrary witchcraft accusations could be. People were invited to accuse anyone they wanted to and it is likely that if the witch hunter in Newcastle had used the methods employed by Hopkins, then anyone unfortunate enough to have been accused would almost certainly have been convicted of being a witch.⁵¹

More common than the involvement of witch hunters in English witch trials were cases which appear to have drawn in independent investigators who merely possessed an interest in witchcraft or had some other involvement in the case. In 1653 at Salisbury, for example, Edmund Bower seems to have been involved in the investigative side of the suspected witch Anne Bodenham. He certainly interviewed her in her cell and was present at her trial, although whether he gave evidence or not is unclear.⁵² Physicians too were often involved in the prosecution of witches. Perhaps the most infamous case was the evidence provided by the eminent physician Sir Thomas Browne in the celebrated trial of Amy ^{Denny} Denny and Rose Cullender for witchcraft in 1662 at Norfolk.⁵³ He had been described as 'a person of great knowledge' who had been asked for his opinion concerning the suspected witches. From the brief mention of his involvement in the proceedings there is no clue as to his actual participation. However, it is likely that his opinion that the victims in the case

⁵¹ He later ran into opposition with the local justices who accused him of fraud, but he 'got away to Scotland, and it was conceived if he had staid he would have made most of the women in the North Witches, for money', J. Fuller, *The History of Berwick on Tweed* (Edinburgh, 1799), pp. 155-6; R. Gardiner, *England's Grievance Discovered, In Relation to the coal trade* (London, 1655), pp. 107-9; cited in D. Harley, 'Mental illness, magical medicine and the devil in northern England, 1650-1700', eds. R. French & A. Wear, *The Medical Revolution in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁵² BL, TT E 705 (24), E. Bower, *Doctor Lamb revived*.

⁵³ Described in: *A trial* (London, 1682).

had been bewitched was probably damning for the two accused witches.⁵⁴ His involvement in the trial led to an early twentieth-century commentator to remark of the suspected witches that 'Their blood, poor creatures, was on the head of the author of *Religio Medici*'.⁵⁵ The importance of the later condemnation against him is not the condemnation itself, but its illustration of how influential Browne's testimony was. His medical standing obviously carried more weight with the presiding magistrates than the plausibility of his argument.

On other occasions members of the clergy could involve themselves in the investigative side of the process. One such example included Michael Ogilvy the Rector of the parish church at Bideford, Devon. He appears to have taken up a role which included interrogating suspected witches. During the trial of Tempérance Lloyd in 1682 the proceedings were temporally adjourned to the parish church at Bideford in order that he could clear up an ambiguity raised during the trial. Apparently one of the witnesses, Elizabeth Eastchurch, testified Lloyd had admitted pricking a piece of leather 9 times, which resulted in Grace Thomas suffering from pricking pains. The rector seems to have undertaken an investigative role by examining her over this. Part of his interview required Lloyd to recite the Lord's prayer, which she was said to have done imperfectly.⁵⁶

Other professional witnesses were often recruited in order to strengthen the evidence against suspects of witchcraft. These were remarkably diverse and included not only physicians and midwives, but also farriers, who in effect were the seventeenth century equivalent of the modern veterinary surgeon. There are two such cases in the Ely assize files for 1647. In one a Robert Wilson of Littleport had his sick

⁵⁴ G. Geis & I. Bunn, 'Sir Thomas Browne and Witchcraft. A cautionary tale for contemporary law and psychiatry', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 4 (1981), pp. 1-11.

⁵⁵ E. Gosse, *Sir Thomas Browne* (London, 1905), p. 105, who described Browne's testimony as 'the most culpable and most stupid act of his life'. See also C. Norman, 'Sir Thomas Browne: *Audi alteram partem*', *British Medical Journal*, 27 (August 1904), p. 474, who in response to the proposal to erect a monument of Sir Thomas in Norwich, suggested that perhaps extra funds should be found for a memorial to Amy Denny and Rose Cullender.

⁵⁶ T. B. Howell, *State Trials* (1810), vol. viii, pp. 1025-6.

horse examined by Anthony, the smith and farrier of Ely. When the farrier saw the horse he immediately told Wilson 'god bless all the rest of your horses and Cattell, for this meare is bewicht'. Much the same occurred when John Cuthbert of Wisbech took his sick horse to the farrier John Strymshaw who was unable to find any natural cause to the ailment.⁵⁷ These cases also demonstrate the court's willingness to accept such opinions in witchcraft trials, opinions which in all probability would have been ruled unacceptable in other types of trial.

The large numbers of persons involved in witchcraft trials, both in the investigative process and as professional witnesses, may account for the lack of repetition of the organised, large-scale witch hunts seen in England during the Mathew Hopkins episode. But of equal importance was that witch hunts were often expensive affairs, not just for the local authorities, but also for ordinary people. The irony here is that many witchcraft trials were instigated by popular agitation, yet the cost of prosecuting the suspected witch fell on the accuser's shoulders, albeit in an indirect way. After all, if the local parishes or boroughs were paying out for witch-hunts, then it was very likely the cost of the trial would have been recouped by increasing the charges on their parishioners. This seems to have been the case, at least in Suffolk, where the records of local expenditure in witch hunts are particularly abundant.

Despite many of the searchers being recruited locally at the time of the trial or investigation, it is still likely their activities involved the local community in some expense. Even though in many cases it is unclear whether the searchers were paid for their services or performed their services for nothing, it does seem likely they were paid at least a nominal fee for their time. Overseers' accounts at St. Mary's Parish, Cambridgeshire, in 1648, reveal 1*s.* 3*d.* paid 'for searching the witches by a parish order'.⁵⁸ Locally recruited searchers were therefore paid for their services and this

⁵⁷ CUL, MS E/12, ff. 5, 8.

⁵⁸ CRO, MSS P30/11/1, in the entry for Great St. Mary's Parish, 1-25 March 1648, under the heading 'The Extraordinary Disbursement'.

would undoubtedly have been a strong financial inducement to many poor villagers in coming forward to give evidence against a suspect. This was also the case with those recruited to watch a witch for the appearance of his or her familiars.

As well as the financial outlay necessary for the payment of locally recruited witnesses, there were additional payments for the full-time searchers who accompanied Mathew Hopkins. There is also ample evidence that Hopkins himself received good money for his work. In the Ipswich Chamberlain's Account Books for 1645 there are a number of entries relating to the expenses incurred by Hopkins and his searchers. These certainly demonstrated that the process of investigating and prosecuting witches was a reasonably lucrative business. On 8 September 1645 Hopkins was paid £2 'for finding out witches'. Goody Phillips, who accompanied him on his tour of south-eastern England, was paid £1 for searching suspected witches. Moreover, 13s. 10d. was paid to various men for 'watching dayes and nighte' suspects apprehended as witches. On 20 November, there were additional payments. Hopkins received a further £2, for finding out witches, and then another £2 for giving evidence at the trial. The widow Phillips was granted a further £1 for searching witches, and £1. 5s. for giving evidence at the trial.⁵⁹

Food and lodging to Mathew Hopkins' band whilst he was in town was also paid. A Mrs Howldine was paid £4. 7s. for 'diet and wine when Mr Hopkins was in Towne and for charges for the witches'. She received a further payment of £15 for 'diet and wine' and 'other charges' at the quarter sessions of 7 January 1645.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, it is not clear the position Mrs Howldine held in relation to the witch trials, but it is likely she provided food and lodging for Hopkins' entourage, in view of the term 'diet and wine' being used in the accounts - common parlance during the seventeenth century for food and lodging.

Finally, there was a host of more minor expenses. All these were meticulously recorded by the clerks. On 24 September, the quarter sessions awarded the gaoler £1.

⁵⁹ Su.RO, MS EE1/12/2, from 'payments' for 1645.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

18s. for cleaning the gaol and providing 'bread and beere' to the prisoners in custody for witchcraft. John Paine was granted 11s. for hanging 7 witches. William Dannell was paid £1 'for the gallows and setting them up'. 6s. were paid for a post to be put by the graves of the witches. For the making of 7 halters the roper, Henry Lawrence, was paid 8s. It even seems that people could claim their expenses for providing a passenger service. The Widow Phillips, who had been required to search some witches, was fetched from Manningtree by horse and cart, for which the owner was paid 8s. All this was in addition to the expenses paid to the presiding Justices, who each received £4.⁶¹

Although most witches in England were hanged, the Suffolk records contain the case of Mother Lakeland, who was burnt at the stake. The accounts of the expenses of this particular form of execution demonstrate how much more expensive it was compared with hanging. In the Chamberlain's account books 1644-5, there is an order making provision for Mother Lakeland's execution in the sum of £3. 3s. 6d.⁶² By comparison the total cost for the hanging of 7 witches, including the making of the halters, erection of the gallows and payment to the executioner, was £2. 5s. Thus the payment for the burning of a witch seems to have been a relatively expensive business.

Witchcraft expenses included not only the costs of paying those involved in the actual rooting out of suspected witches, but also the keeping of the suspected witches in gaol. In Suffolk, where according to one source there were supposed to have been 120 witches awaiting trial in custody,⁶³ this would have placed a considerable burden, both financial and logistical, on the local authority. In October 1645, the gaoler for Bury St. Edmunds gaol, Joseph Allexander, was awarded £6. 10s. for the expenses of keeping prisoners at Bury St. Edmunds jail for witchcraft. He was paid a further £6 as expenses for committing the suspected witches for trial at the next quarter

⁶¹ Su.RO, MS EE1/12/2, from 'payments' for 1645.

⁶² Su.RO, MS C9/11/62, f. 28, Chamberlain's accounts, 1644-5.

⁶³ BL, TT E 301 (3), *A true Relation of the Araignment of eightene Witches* (London, 1645), passim.

sessions.⁶⁴ Moreover, the already overburdened gaoler would no doubt have incurred still greater costs when, as happened in October 1645, James More of Marlesford, Suffolk, who had been awaiting trial for witchcraft, managed to escape from his gaol. The warrant issued for his capture ordered 'all Constables & others his ma[jes]ties officers ... to make diligent Serch for the said James More & to attach the body of him and it safely to convey to the said gaol att Ipswich'.⁶⁵ The cost of organising the search for More would no doubt have involved a not inconsiderable expense on the part of the gaoler. In addition the under sheriff for Suffolk, John Arnold, was awarded the sum of £3 for the 'extraordinary charges in the executinge divers sev[r]all p[er]sons for witchcraft in this division', by the Treasurer of the King's Bench.⁶⁶

There seems to have been two methods by which local authorities raised the necessary sums to meet these 'extraordinary' expenses. The first was seizing the goods and chattels of the person found guilty of witchcraft. However, this was not generally the most lucrative, as most people convicted of witchcraft were poor or of limited means. In addition there was the added problem that the suspected witch could get acquitted, thus incurring the expense without enabling the possibility of recouping it. Sometimes a retrospective order for payment could be made. It was perfectly possible, for example, for the court to order that the personal effects of the convicted witch be handed over, even after they had been inherited by a near relative after the execution of the witch. Such an order occurred at Suffolk in October 1645. The quarter sessions was informed that Thomas Barnes and Thomas Hasell of Rushmere had received the sum of £3 and goods and chattels to the value of 15s., which had formerly belonged to Sara and Alice Warner who had recently been executed for witchcraft. The court ordered that half of the monies and goods should be handed over to the presiding justices - Sir Nicholas Bacon and Sir John Cotton -

⁶⁴ Su.RO, MS B105/2/1, f. 79, Order Book, 1639-51.

⁶⁵ Ibid., f. 78.

⁶⁶ Ibid., f. 93v.

and the other half to John Pope, who had incurred 'great charges for the conveying of the said witches to Bury'.⁶⁷

The second, and more commonly used, method to raise money was to order the local parishes to levy rates on their parishioners. In Suffolk, because of the exorbitant and unusual expenses involved in witchcraft prosecutions, it was deemed necessary to impose payment orders to ensure the cash was raised. This was achieved by passing responsibility for such payments onto the community. In 1645 the Ipswich quarter sessions ordered that because the prosecution of witches had been initiated by the inhabitants of the relevant parishes, they should meet the costs of the prosecution.⁶⁸ At the parish of Hallsworth the churchwardens and overseers of the poor were required to levy such rates on their parishioners.⁶⁹ Not surprisingly all this led to numerous local disputes between various parishes concerning costs, and over who was responsible for paying them. Such disputes could only be settled by the imposition of orders by local JPs. At the general sessions held at Ipswich on 16 January 1645, the two JPs were ordered to settle the differences between the inhabitants of Copdock and the Gaoler of Ipswich, for the payment of charges for witches.⁷⁰ In addition they were ordered to settle the differences between the inhabitants of the parishes of Horham Athelington and Brandeston concerning the payment of rates and charges for the witches accused by the town of Brandeston at the last general gaol delivery held at Bury St. Edmunds. This dispute appears to have been settled when the general sessions for the 10 April 1646, ordered that the inhabitants of the two parishes should pay a proportional rate each. If any refused to pay, then the JPs were to 'call such p[er]son or p[er]sons soe refuseinge before them or one of them to answer the same & to be bound with sufficient sureties for their appearance att the next gaole delive[r]y, or Sessions of the peace'.⁷¹ The inhabitants of Stowmarket must have also registered a

⁶⁷ Su.RO, MS B105/2/1, f. 136.

⁶⁸ Ibid., f. 79.

⁶⁹ Ibid., f. 80.

⁷⁰ Ibid., f. 81b.

⁷¹ Ibid., f. 84.

complaint at the charges imposed on their parish by the quarter sessions, as in 1646 the Ipswich justices ordered that ‘all & ev[r]y of the Inhabitants of the towne of Stowm[ar]kett shall upon sight of this order pay unto the now constables of the said towne their sev[r]all Somes rated & assessed towards the charges for the witches in the same towne’. Again, if any refused, then they were to be brought before the justices at the next gaol delivery.⁷²

The mention of the expenses incurred in prosecuting witches was especially unusual when one considers that the expenses for other crimes are hardly mentioned at all in the Chamberlain’s accounts and order books. This would further suggest the exceptional communal obligation that the prosecution of witches seems to have evoked among the local authorities responsible for financing such episodes. It is true that felonies such as murder and arson do appear in the account books in much the same way as witchcraft cases. Such expenses included, as in witchcraft cases, the cost of hanging the guilty party or the cost of the trial. However, there is no appearance in these records of an attempt by the local authorities to recoup their expenses. In this sense witchcraft seems to be a peculiarly unique crime, in that the accusers were the ones being levied for the costs. One explanation for this could be that local authorities wished to discourage future accusations of witchcraft by charging the locals. If the pamphlet literature is to be believed then it would appear Suffolk suffered a disproportionately large number of witchcraft prosecutions, and this would no doubt have resulted in a very real concern about the financial and logistical burden such trials entailed.

Perhaps one of the most influential factors behind the condemnation of witches lay in the pressure exerted by popular agitation. The influence of the ‘mob’ on JPs was often a major obstacle on those who wished to employ a more circumspect attitude to proving the offence of witchcraft. At the trial of Ann Bodenham at Salisbury assizes in 1653, ‘the crowd of spectators made such a noise that the judge

⁷² Su.RO, MS B105/2/1, f. 136.

could not heere the prisoner, nor the prisoner the judge; but the words were herded from one to the other ... and sometimes not truly reported'.⁷³ Often juries failed to follow the recommendations of the presiding judge.⁷⁴ Moreover, many justices were influenced by other factors, such as fear of retribution from the witch if he or she should be found guilty. Such fears were no doubt bolstered by the writings of James VI, who had stated it was possible for a witch to have power over a presiding magistrate depending on how he dealt with her. If, for example, he was 'slothful' towards the witch, God was able to make them instruments to 'waken and punish his slouth. But if he be contrarie, he according to the just law of God, and allowable law of all Nationes, will be diligent in examining and punishing of them: God will not permit their master to trouble or hinder so good a worke'.⁷⁵

It is hardly surprising, with such a wealth of popular folklore and superstition being incorporated into the actual legal process of prosecuting a witch, some justices and even circuit judges, were intimidated by popular agitation. It was sometimes impossible for a sceptical judge to go against the popular demand to see a suspected witch condemned and put to death. Lord Keeper Francis North (1637-1685) mentioned he dreaded presiding over a trial of witches because the jury was so often swayed in such cases by public opinion. According to the Judge it was seldom that a suspected witch was brought to trial without a raging mob at her heels all intent on seeing her death. The dilemma the judge often found himself between was such that if he declared against the 'vulgar opinion' of the mob, that the devil had no power to torment and kill innocent children, or to divert himself to ruining people's cheese, butter, pigs or geese, then 'the ignorant and foolish rabble ... cry, this judge hath no religion, for he doth not believe in witches; and so, to show that they have some, hang the poor wretches'.⁷⁶ This meant the judge had to exercise prudence in attempting to

⁷³ F. Hutchinson, *An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft*, p. 2.

⁷⁴ *Doctrine of Devils* (London, 1676), p. 60.

⁷⁵ James VI, *Daemonologie*, p. 50.

⁷⁶ R. North, *The Lives of the Norths*, ed. A. Jessop (London, 1890), vol. i, p. 166.

convince the jury, not that witches did not exist, but instead to show that a fraud had been perpetrated, as this was the only way that he could save face in front of the public. Another example of the susceptibility of a presiding judge to the whims of the crowd occurred during a witchcraft trial in Exeter. North was concerned the presiding judge (Mr Justice Raymond) would let the 'poor women die'. North sat in on the trial because of his concern over the case and also, no doubt, to observe how his colleague would deal with it. Apparently the witnesses in the case testified they had seen the devil in the shape of a cat jump through the window of the accused witch's home, but there was no proof this was the devil. North criticised his fellow judge for accepting at face value the confession of one 'in a sort of melancholy madness'. He also asserted the confession of a person incriminating herself of witchcraft should not be taken at face value unless there was plain evidence it was rational and sensible, rather than the deluded ravings of a 'lunatic, or distracted person'. Unfortunately, this point was left by Judge Raymond completely in the hands of the jury, and as a result the two witches were convicted. The author stated that at least one of the suspected witches, to his knowledge, was hanged.⁷⁷ Such anecdotes tell us much about the contrast between popular superstitious belief and the beliefs of the educated élite. Francis North quite clearly felt witchcraft was an impossible offence to prove in law, mainly for the reasons already discussed. Like many before him he was criticising the system which allowed a suspected witch to be found guilty, rather than merely expressing disbelief in the existence of witchcraft. The make-up of the jury, he argued, made it next to impossible for a suspected witch to be tried fairly.

In addition, even if a suspected witch survived a prosecution, it was rare for his or her reputation to remain intact. Often an acquittal would remain on 'hold' only to be brought up the next time the suspected witch was tried. This was certainly the case with a group of witches put on trial at Bideford Devon, in 1682. One of the three witches accused, Tempérance Lloyd, admitted when examined to bewitching Grace

⁷⁷ R. North, *The Lives of the Norths*, ed. A. Jessop (London, 1890), vol. i, p. 168.

Thomas. However, upon further questioning from the JP following her confession, she admitted that on the 14 March 1670 she had been acquitted by Exeter assizes for bewitching to death William Herbert, a husbandman.⁷⁸ She now confessed she was guilty of this past offence by the persuasion of the same black man (the devil) who had tempted her to bewitch Grace Thomas. During the trial it was also disclosed she had been accused of witchcraft in May 1679, when it had been alleged she had bewitched Ann Fellow, daughter of Edward Fellow. Despite her body being searched at the time by 4 local women, the evidence against her then was said to be 'not so clear and conspicuous', and Mr Fellow did not pursue the prosecution any further. However, during her trial in 1682, she confessed her guilt to this crime by admitting three years previously she and the black man had hurt Anne Fellow.⁷⁹ Despite her confession, Lloyd was not retried for the past offences of bewitching William Herbert and Ann Fellow, but there can be no doubt these confessions heavily influenced the Justices, for she was found guilty and hanged for the other offences in 1682.⁸⁰

In other cases where witches could not be convicted for an offence of witchcraft, attempts were often made to convict their children. After Francis North had presided over the acquittal of a suspected wizard at Taunton, he had been approached by a hideous old woman who cried, 'God bless your lordship'. He asked her what the matter was and she replied 'forty years ago, they would have hanged me for a witch, and they could not, and, now, they would have hanged my poor son'.⁸¹ The past could also catch up with a suspected witch in the form of the previous character of their parents. Often evidence was presented at court that one or both of the suspected witches' parents had been accused or convicted of witchcraft. In this sense it was widely believed sorcery was hereditary in nature. When Peter Burbush was accused of bewitching John Abratia of Ely, it was said he 'hath bin commonly reputed a witch:

⁷⁸ This acquittal appears in PRO, Assi 23/1.

⁷⁹ T. B. Howell, *State Trials* (London, 1816), vol. viii, p. 1018.

⁸⁰ PRO, Assi. 23/2, 'Assize Records for Western Circuit'.

⁸¹ R. North, *The Lives of the Norths*, vol. i, p. 169.

& his mother before him'.⁸² When the searcher, Ellen Barron, gave evidence to the Ely Justices in 1646, she related how Elizabeth Foote said to her 'Woe woe was the tyme that ever I was borne of such accursed mother'.⁸³ Likewise, when Walter Mayers gave evidence against the suspected witch Anne Dewsborough, he reasoned that she must have been a witch because her mother had commonly been suspected to have been one.⁸⁴ When Sir Edward Fairfax gave the account of the bewitchment of his daughter, in 1621, he pointed out that 5 of the 6 accused suspected witches were known to him. One was a widow whose husband had been executed. She had come to the neighbourhood with a reputation for witchcraft and theft and her daughter was also believed to have been a witch. The third suspect was a widow and thought to have been a witch for many years, also 'her mother, two aunts, two sisters, her husband, and some of her children, have all been long esteemed witches, for that it seemeth hereditary to her family'.⁸⁵

If popular belief held that witchcraft was hereditary this was not necessarily reflected by demonological writers. John Gaule argued that witchcraft was not hereditary, pointing out that 'none are borne, all are made witches'. For him it was the devil that made witches: 'And therefore finding a faithlesse heart, a frowned nature, a feeble sex, and impotent age, an illiterate education, a melancholy constitution, and a disconted condition, hee now workes further ... to blinde the understanding more and more, to deprave the will'.⁸⁶ Such views were an attempt to remove the superstition from witchcraft. Witches did exist, but they had to be tempted into such a belief by the devil. The belief that a witch's power was hereditary implied they had no choice in the matter, which Gaule thought wrong. It was their lack of godliness that was to blame, not the accident of their birth.

⁸² CUL, MSS E/12, f. 12.

⁸³ Ibid., f. 7.

⁸⁴ Ibid., f. 19.

⁸⁵ W. Grainge, ed., *Daemonologia: A discourse of witchcraft as it was acted in the family of Mr Edward Fairfax of Fuyston, in the county of York, in the year 1621* (Harrowgate, 1882), pp. 32-3.

⁸⁶ J. Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience*, pp. 38, 49, 51.

The influence of ordinary people on the decisions of Judges could also be exerted indirectly through the land-owning gentry. The presiding judge could come under pressure from a landlord who had a genuine fear his estate workers might abscond if something was not done to deal with a suspected witch. One such case was related by Francis North while he had been accompanying Mr Justice Raymond on his circuit. A local landowner, Sir James Long, had warned Mr Justice Raymond that if the accused witch appearing before him escaped, his estate would not be worth keeping because his tenants would desert him. Although the witch was subsequently acquitted the popular opposition to this decision by Sir James' tenants resulted in him successfully canvassing the judge to keep the woman in gaol.⁸⁷

Figure 9: The Witch of Newbury



The witch of Newbury floating on a plank.

Source: BL, TT E 69 (9), *A most certain, strange, and true Discovery of a Witch.*

The influence of popular attitudes to the punishment of witchcraft is also illustrated by the unofficial action occasionally taken against a suspected witch

⁸⁷ R. North, *The Lives of the Norths*, vol. i, p. 168.

without recourse to the law. One such case took place during the English Civil War, when a woman was summarily executed for witchcraft by a group of Parliamentary soldiers at Newbury in 1643.⁸⁸ This incident also demonstrates the anxieties prevalent during the civil war concerning witchcraft. The woman was captured, after being seen on the river standing on a plank floating downstream past some Parliamentary soldiers. It is likely she may have been punting in a coracle, or similar vessel, and the superstitious soldiers may have thought this either supernatural or suspicious. This is reflected by the fact that a second version of the story reports the incident from the point of view that the woman may have been a spy sent by the nearby royalist garrison.⁸⁹ Apparently she survived being shot twice, and being run through with a sword. She was only killed when one of the soldiers pointed out her spells of protection would be removed if they could draw blood from her forehead. Once they had done this she was despatched with a pistol shot behind the ear. Thus she had been proved to be a witch not in a court of law, or by proving she had made a compact with the devil, but by the reliance on popular superstition concerning witch-lore, namely that scratching, or drawing blood from the forehead of a suspected witch would prevail against the strongest magic. Scratching or the drawing of blood from a suspected witch seems to have been a common remedy for mobs of people who wished to see a suspected witch punished, especially before the legal process had started. It is also possible that such behaviour may explain the massacre of the baggage women following the battle of Naseby, many of whom were said to have been scratched on their faces by the Parliamentary soldiers.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ BL, TT E 69 (9), *A most Certain, Strange, and true Discovery of a Witch* (London, 1643), pp. 4-7.

⁸⁹ BL, TT E 69 (8), *Mercurius Civicus. Londons Intelligence or, Truth impartially related from thence to the Whole Kingdom, to prevent mis-information*, 21-8 Sept. (London, 1643), p. 140.

⁹⁰ This hypothesis has been argued by R. T. Davies, who has pointed out that all the accounts of the massacre mention that the women had been either, 'marked in their faces or noses with slashes and cuts', J. Vicars, *The Burning Bush not Consumed, or, The Fourth and Last Part of the Parliamentarie - Chronicle* (London, 1646); or 'some of them were cut by our Soldiers when they took them', *Letter from a Gentleman in Northampton* (London, 1645). Because the scratching of the face was a familiar remedy for dealing with witchcraft, he concluded that many of the Parliamentary soldiers believed these women to be witches. Vid. R. T. Davies, *Four Centuries of Witch Belief* (London, 1947), pp. 155-8.

One thing is certain, once a suspect had been accused of witchcraft he or she was in great danger of being attacked by those who genuinely believed such remedies would be of benefit in removing the witch's powers. When Edmund Bower was narrating his account of his involvement in the trial of the suspected witch Anne Bodenham in 1653, he described a visit to her cell in Salisbury. He brought with him the afflicted party in the hope that Bodenham would be able to remove the bewitchment. He mentioned that there were also some women in the room who wanted to take some blood from the suspected witch, and that he was there to protect her from them, 'she being very much afraid, and crying out, The wicked people will scratch and tear me'.⁹¹ When the suspected witch, Joan Rigg, was examined by justices at the Ely assizes in 1647, she claimed she had her face scratched by Mary Cuthbert who had accused her of bewitching her husband's horse. This incident seemed to have been pre-planned as there was also a mob present which took hold of Joan Rigg and threw her down upon the horse and held her there. She was told they would not let her go until the horse either died or was cured.⁹² Such attacks on suspected witches by superstitious country folk continued well after the last witch had been executed in England in 1685.⁹³

In addition folklore beliefs often prevailed during the seventeenth century over such things as punishment of the witch after they had been found guilty in court. Just as there is the belief today that witches in England were burnt at the stake rather than hanged, so too it appears to have been the popular belief in the seventeenth century that this was the proper punishment for a witch. In 1655, during a trial for witchcraft in Kent before Judge Warburton, after the suspected witches had been found guilty

⁹¹ BL, TT E 705 (24), E. Bower, *Doctor Lamb revived*, p. 20.

⁹² CUL MSS E/12, f. 13.

⁹³ For examples vid: *Gentleman's Magazine* (Jan., 1731), pp. 29-30; (Apr., 1751), p. 168; (May, 1751), p. 198; (Aug., 1751), pp. 375, 378; (Jul., 1760), p. 346; (Aug., 1769), p. 411; (Oct., 1769), p. 506. For a list of attacks on suspected witches in the 18th and 19th centuries, vid: J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 170, cited in M. J. Gaskill, 'Attitudes to Crime in Early Modern England, with special reference to witchcraft, coining and murder', PhD thesis (Cantab., 1982), p. 89.

and sentenced, some present during the trial wished the witches could be burnt to ashes. 'It was the received opinion amongst many', according to the author of the pamphlet account of the trial, 'that the body of a Witch being burnt, her blood is prevented thereby from becoming hereditary to her Progeny in the same evill, which by hanging is not'.⁹⁴ At the Norfolk summer sessions in 1668, John Stockinge, a boy of 13 years, being very ill, had no doubts about the character of the suspected witch Mary Banister. He said 'if I dye burne Goode Banister for she hath bewitched me to death'.⁹⁵ In fact there was only one case in England during the period 1640-70 of a witch being burnt at the stake, that of Mother Lakeland in Suffolk. She appeared before the justices at the Quarter Sessions held at Ipswich in August, 1645, and was found guilty on various counts of witchcraft. However, she was burnt not for witchcraft, but for the offence of Petty Treason, an offence sometimes employed to deal with a wife who had murdered her husband. Thus the wording of the presentment was 'for witchcraft & traitorously murdering of Jn. Lakeland her husband ... Let her be burnt to ashes'.⁹⁶ It is likely this case, which was highly publicised, would have entered local folklore and confirmed the existing popular belief that the only proper method of dealing with a convicted witch was by burning.

In addition the methods used to detect witches seem to have become established through popular belief. Thus, when a professional witch hunter such as Mathew Hopkins began to ply his trade he would not have been introducing any new forms of detection, because many of the detection methods employed by him were not only enshrined in English folklore, but had also gained validity by their inclusion in numerous pamphlets on the subject.⁹⁷ Whether the techniques used by witch hunters reached the mass market through these mediums is difficult to assert categorically in

⁹⁴ BL, TT E 673 (19), *A Prodigious & Tragical History of the Arraignment, Tryall, Confession, and Condemnation of six Witches at Maidstone in Kent* (London, 1652), p. 5. This case also offers further evidence of the popular belief that witchcraft was hereditary.

⁹⁵ PRO, MS Assi. 16, 16.

⁹⁶ Su.RO, C8/4/7, f. 415, Sessions of the peace, 1625-49.

⁹⁷ BL, TT E 307 (11), *The Lawes against Witches and Conjurations* (London, 1645), pp. 4-6; W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned art of Witchcraft*, pp. 201-4, 208.

view of the difficulty in assessing popular literacy figures. However, with plays and other literature, which could be performed to an illiterate audience, one can say with more conviction this was so. Although there were many plays which included witches and witchcraft in their plots, it is more unusual to find examples which include references to the methodology of witch hunting. Two examples of the watching of a witch to see if her familiar would come to her are alluded to in the plays of Aphra Benn. The first, *The Dutch Lover* published in 1673, has one of the characters say

And Women must be watcht as Witches are,
E'er they confess, and then yield apace.

The other comes from the play, *The City Heiress*, in which a character is giving advice to another concerning his failure to win over his love.

You shou'd have huft and bluster'd at her door,
Been very impudent and saucy, Sir,
Leud, ruffling, mad; courted at all hours and seasons;
Let her not rest, nor eat, nor sleep, nor visit.
Believe me, *Charles*, Women love Importunity.
Watch her close, watch her like a Witch, Boy,
Till she confess the Devil in her, - Love.⁹⁸

However, it is important to exercise caution when using literary evidence in this way. It would be impossible to say whether this procedure was still conducted in witchcraft investigations during the 1670s, without corroboration from legal records, but such evidence at least indicates that watching or depriving a witch of her sleep were methods still in vogue as late as the 1670s.

Popular myths surrounding witchcraft between 1640-70 did not always accord with the proof required in law. Although it has been argued by some that the development of the mythology of witchcraft did not really start until after witches had

⁹⁸ A. Benn, 'The Dutch Lover', Act I, scene ii; 'The City Heiress; or, Sir Timothy Treat-all', Act I, scene i, in M. Summers, ed., *The Works of Aphra Benn* (London, 1915), 6 vols., vol i, p. 234; vol. 2, p. 218.

ceased to be prosecuted,⁹⁹ a case can be made to show that witch lore had been established for some time prior to this. While it is accepted that such a process did develop in later centuries, it is perhaps more likely to have been a continuance of previous popular belief rather than a 'product of the nineteenth-century romantic literary imagination'.¹⁰⁰ It is true that the popular stereotype of the witch as an old hag or crone did not appear in the English indictments, but that was because it was not necessary to prove such features in law. They certainly did appear in popular ballads, pamphlets and in many depositions of the time. The lack of will to pursue the crime of witchcraft towards the end of the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, enabled the return, not the development, of popular mythology. In this sense the stereotypical witch was changed, because under the witchcraft statutes mythological belief did not constitute evidence. Thus it may have been the case that popular myths were repressed by the introduction of the various witchcraft statutes. This would have explained why it was that after the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in 1736 mythological beliefs in witchcraft continued to remain popular.

⁹⁹ M. J. Gaskill, 'Attitudes to Crime in Early Modern England, with special reference to witchcraft, coining and murder', PhD thesis (Cantab., 1982), p. 124.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

CHAPTER 6

The Practice of Witchcraft

During the Civil War reports of witchcraft were often used to convey particular theological or political opinions to simple folk by exploiting their superstitious beliefs. Popular beliefs and superstitions concerning witchcraft also began to be supported by many learned writers during this period, especially after 1660. No doubt this was aided by the rise in popularity of empiricism in scientific thought. The members of the Royal Society Joseph Glanvill and Henry More, for example, had both claimed witches existed because so many of those accused of witchcraft had admitted their offence voluntarily, and also because numerous persons had claimed to have witnessed acts of witchcraft.¹ Whether the manipulation of popular belief was cynically exploited in a similar fashion with witchcraft prosecution is another matter, and probably impossible to prove. Certainly the breakdown of the judicial system was a contributory factor,² but there is no evidence to suggest witch-hunts, as opposed to the publication of witchcraft accounts, were instigated by central government. Instead it seems more likely that the judicial chaos prevalent during this period, coupled with social tensions caused by increased sectarianism, allowed certain individuals to exploit such conditions by instigating witch hunts either for reasons of religious zeal or simply to make money. Moreover they were able to achieve this largely unchecked by any authority. During the English Civil War witchcraft persecution was dominated by the large scale witch hunts of Mathew Hopkins in East Anglia and the south east of England, while during the Restoration a similar campaign took place in Somerset presided over by the JP Richard Hunt. These episodes of witchcraft between 1640-70

¹ T. H. Jobe, 'The Devil in Restoration Science: The Glanvill-Webster Debate', *Isis*, 72 (1981), pp. 342-356; M. Hunter, *Science and society in Restoration England*, p. 182.

² F. A. Inderwick, *Interregnum (A. D. 1648 - 1660)* (London, 1891), p. 153, went so far as to say that 'from the autumn of 1642 to the autumn of 1646 no judges went the circuits', and W. Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718* (London, 1911), p. 201, said that this situation had resulted in England being in 'a state of judicial anarchy'.

will be analysed with a view to gaining some further insight into popular belief and the tensions prevalent within isolated rural communities.

It is intended to examine these themes by analysing ~~THE EXISTANT~~ ^{A SELECTION OF} quarter sessions and borough sessions records, ~~FROM A SELECTION OF AREAS,~~ as well as using pamphlet material. The sources covering the Interregnum probably rely more heavily than those of the Civil War or the Restoration on pamphlet accounts. This is because for the two areas researched - East Anglia and the south west - the local sources are very limited. As a result any analysis of the 1650s must remain incomplete. Moreover, the analysis during the three decades inevitably relies on a thematic approach as there is much overlap between the way witchcraft was dealt with in practice and how it was portrayed during this period.

In addition to the more commonly researched records of the quarter sessions trials there were the borough sessions. These still met quarterly, but were mainly responsible for dispensing justice in some of the larger market towns and cities. Although the individual case numbers in such records tend to be fewer than in county quarter sessions, obviously reflecting the more local nature of these courts, an analysis of such records might help to provide an answer as to how popular superstitious beliefs were converted into prosecutions of witches. There are three local sets of records relating to the Mathew Hopkins witch hunt that will be examined: the borough sessions of King's Lynn, the borough sessions of Great Yarmouth and the Ely Episcopal records. The King's Lynn borough sessions contain details of an outbreak of witchcraft investigated by Hopkins in 1646, probably in the Autumn, soon after he had left Essex and Suffolk. In September, Hopkins moved on to Great Yarmouth and then to Ely, where he stayed until at least September 1647.³

The local episode of witch hunting which occurred in 1647 in the diocese of Ely has remained largely untapped by historians.⁴ The records are informative and useful

³ These estimates of Hopkins's movements are based on the dates on the trial records, all of which mention Hopkins.

⁴ A brief analysis of the depositions taken during this trial was published in a pamphlet by the local historian C. E. Parson in 1915 (*Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications*, vol. xix, 1915), a

because the depositions appear to have survived in their entirety. There are 54 depositions and examinations relating to the witch hunt conducted by Hopkins and John Stearne throughout south-eastern England, between August 1646 and September 1647. The sessions were presided over by the JP and MP, Sir John Hobarte.⁵ However, despite being useful indications of the motives surrounding accusations of witchcraft, the information these depositions disclose about the witnesses and the suspected witches is fairly limited. Their ages are not given, nor (in the majority of cases) are their occupations. The results of the individual cases are not shown, and because the depositions are the only records that survive of the trials, the sentences cannot be found from other sources. However it seems likely, given the strength of the evidence against many of the suspects, that few would have escaped the hangman's noose. In spite of these reservations there is still much useful information to be gleaned from the records. Most provide the sex and marital status of the examinant and all provide useful accounts of the background to the accusation. Although the Ely evidence relates to only a small fraction of the witches prosecuted by Hopkins between 1645-7, the remarkably good condition of the depositions make them a useful source for the motives behind accusations of witchcraft.

Notwithstanding the fact that there are only 9 witches listed in the King's Lynn presentments and only 6 in the Great Yarmouth borough sessions for the 1646 period, and only 4 witches listed at King's Lynn for 1650, they may be usefully compared with those at Ely. The problem here is that the information within the borough sessions is also fairly limited, containing details only of the indictment. They do not contain a record of the examinations of those accused or the depositions of the witnesses. However, they do provide the nature of the charge, something which is

copy of which is kept with the 'Taylor Papers' at NRO, MSS 4413/3. In addition M. J. Gaskill has used the records in his PhD thesis 'Attitudes to Crime in Early modern England, with special reference to Witchcraft, coining and murder' (Cambridge, 1994), and also 'Witchcraft and Power in Early Modern England: the case of Margaret More', in J. L. Kermode & G. L. Walker, eds., *Women and Crime in Early Modern England* (London, 1994).

⁵ It was said that he had been elected an MP after a very tough and fiercely fought contest. W. Rye, *Norfolk Families* (Norwich, 1913), p. 352.

lacking in the Ely depositions. Because the Ely assize files are the richest in information, mainly because they contain the depositions of witnesses and defendants whereas the King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth records contain only the indictments, they will be looked at first, despite being chronologically the last in Hopkins's tour of the south east. The other records provide comparison.

For the Restoration period the celebrated trial of witches held at Taunton in 1664 and presided over by the JP Richard Hunt will be analysed. Unfortunately the presentments do not survive, but the depositions were copied by Richard Hunt and sent to his friend Joseph Glanvill who published them in 1666 as *Some Philosophical Considerations touching Witches and Witchcraft*. This was one of the first texts used by Glanvill, but the account was re-published a number of times under different titles, mainly in response to the attacks on it by Webster.⁶ This trial took place within a short time span, from January to early February 1664, and the escalation of confession after the initial investigation suggests the interrogations were being conducted centrally, possibly by a single interrogator. In addition the wording of the depositions contain certain similarities, especially between the confessions of the alleged witches and the allegations made by the victims. This was a relatively small outbreak, in terms of numbers of witches, but informative because of the unique nature of the allegations.

Table 1: Sex of Witches (Ely)

Sex	Witch
Male	6
Female	11
Total	17

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, 'Ely assize files'.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the Ely Records is the relatively high incidence of male witches accused. Out of the 17 accused, 6 were men (See Table 1).

⁶ For a useful summary of the controversy between Glanvill and Webster, See: T. H. Jobe, 'The Devil in Restoration Science: The Glanvill-Webster Witchcraft Debate', *Isis*, 72 (1981), pp. 343-356.

Two of the accused men, John Bonham and Robert Ellis, were the husbands of accused witches and thus a possible explanation to their prosecution is that they were proceeded against by virtue of their association with their wives, or *vice versa*.⁷ However, it would appear that the other 4 - Thomas Dye, Adam Sabie, Peter Burbush and William Watson - may well have had no connection with any of the other accused witches and thus some other explanation must be sought. In common with most of the accused witches from this trial, these 4 all shared similar characteristics: they had all been accounted witches for a long time and appeared to have been unpopular figures within their community. According to the evidence of Humphrey Davis, one of the 4 accused male witches - Thomas Dye - had fallen out with him and threatened him, 'And afterwards this Informant was lamed for a Quarter of a yeare together & is persuaded that this said Thomas Dye was the occasion of it by the help of an evill spirit'.⁸ Another male witch - Adam Sabie - had been accounted a witch for 35 years. Again following a dispute with a neighbour he was accused of bewitching John Kirbie 'untill he was made so feable & weake that he could not feed'. In addition Sabie seems to have been accused of bewitching Kirbie's child so that it 'was taken lame & Continued so for the space of a yeare'.⁹ Henry Freeman, a miller from Ely, gave evidence that Peter Burbush had been 'a long time reputed a witch' and had given him 'threatening speeches'.¹⁰ Benjamin Wyne, John Synwood and John Sissons all deposed together that William Watson had been suspected a witch for 30 years and had confessed to them how at various times he had bewitched livestock belonging to them.¹¹ William Watson was the only one of the 4 male witches who actually confessed to bewitchment. In his deposition he confessed that the devil had appeared to him 30 years ago in the guise of a mouse. After forming a compact with the devil he sent the mouse to bewitch and kill two heffers belonging to Richard Gunton of

⁷ CUL, MSS E/12, ff. 9, 11, 18, 22.

⁸ Ibid., f. 21.

⁹ Ibid., f. 17.

¹⁰ Ibid., f. 12.

¹¹ Ibid., f. 16.

Wynford. In addition he sent his spirit to kill livestock belonging to other members of the same village.¹²

Likewise at Somerset in 1664 the proportion of male witches is relatively high (Table 2). It is unclear, however, whether all the Somerset witches were proceeded against. This is because there are only 5 witches from whom there are any records of examinations: Elizabeth Style, Alice Duke, Catherine Green alias Cornish, Catherine Green (the daughter of Catherine Green/Cornish) and Margaret Agar. Therefore it is impossible to speculate whether the other alleged witches, who were all accused by these 5, were proceeded against. There are no legal records surviving for this period in Somerset and so it has not been possible to verify their testimony. The important point is not so much whether the alleged witches were prosecuted in the courts, but the readiness of witnesses in accusing men as well as women of witchcraft.

By contrast, in relation to the 9 witches who were tried in 1646 before Edward

Table 2: Sex of Witches (Somerset)

Sex	Witch
Male	9
Female	12
Total	21

Source: J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), pp. 127-197.

Robinson, the Mayor of King's Lynn, one finds the proportion of male to female witches in line with other findings (See Table 3). In other areas the proportion of male witches was generally much smaller. In Kent, out of a total of 80 witches accused between 1560 and 1700, only 7 were men.¹³ In Essex during the 1640s out of the 44 witches prosecuted, 41 were women and only 3 were men.¹⁴

¹² CUL, MSS E/12, f. 16.

¹³ A. Pollock, 'Social and Economic Characteristics of Witchcraft Accusation in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Kent', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, vol. xcv, 37-48, pp. 39.

¹⁴ C. E. Ewen, *Witch hunting*, cases 595-658.

Table 3: Sex of Witches (King's Lynn)

Sex	Witch
Male	2
Female	7
Total	9

Source: NRO, MS KL/C21/2, King's Lynn borough session minute books, 1639-55.

However, as regards the sex of the victims and those who endorsed the depositions as witnesses, men would seem to be in the majority. Out of the 64 people who were mentioned in the Ely depositions, 36 were men while 28 were women. This proportion is even more pronounced if one separates the victims of the actual witchcraft from those whose names appear as witnesses in the depositions. As can be seen from Table 4 the gender differentiation is now quite pronounced amongst victims, with only 4 women to 28 men. This was almost certainly a reflection of the

Table 4: Sex of Victims and Witnesses (Ely)

Gender	Victims	Witnesses*
Male	28	13
Female	4	15
Unknown	4**	0
Total	36	28

* Witnesses who appear as Victims have not been included.

** Mentioned as 'child'.

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, Ely assize files.

nature of the allegations made against the witches (see Table 5). The vast majority of accusations consisted of bewitching livestock. There were 16 instances of cattle being bewitched, 6 of horses, 2 of sheep and 2 of fowl. In all but one of the cases, in which Elizabeth Norman lost 6 mares and 4 cows to the witchcraft of Elizabeth Foote, the owners were men. Thus the gender of victims seems to have been in direct relation to the type of bewitchment that had been alleged and this may explain the greater proportion of male witches as well.

Table 5: Instances of Witchcraft (Ely)

Instances of Witchcraft	Number
Bewitched Child	7
Bewitched Adult	9
Bewitched Livestock	26
Bewitched Produce	1
Bewitched Property	1
Total	44

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, Ely Assize Files.

If, for example, the origin of the disputes revolved around disagreements about property or livestock, most of which were owned by men, then it is not only more likely that men would have been involved in the accusations, but it is also more likely men would have been accused of witchcraft.

A good example of this is the accusation made against the Ely blacksmith, Peter Burbush. As noted earlier he had been reputed as a witch for a long time, always falling out with his neighbours.¹⁵ In September 1647 Henry Freeman, a miller of Ely, testified that Burbush had threatened him and ‘immediately after the Mill of this Informant fell downe in a very great calme, this Informant a woman and two children being in it & this Informant saith that he is persuaded that Peter Burbush aforesaid did occasion it by some familiar spirite’. In addition Freeman had lost 9 horses in the space of a month and was equally convinced that they had been bewitched.¹⁶ Likewise William Watson seems to have been used as a scapegoat for every calamity that occurred amongst local peoples’ livestock in and around Ely. Benjamin Wyne, a local gentleman, and two farmers, John Sissons and John Synwood, all deposed in May 1647 to the justices at Ely that Watson had been known as a witch for 30 years and had admitted to them to making a contract with the devil and being given a familiar

¹⁵ See above, p. 187.

¹⁶ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 12.

spirit in the shape of a mole. He had then sent his familiar to kill two horses belonging to Richard Cinton of Wynford and various cattle belonging to others in the vicinity.¹⁷ When examined by the justices Watson admitted all this to be true and in addition confessed to sending his imp to kill some sheep belonging to Stephen Bellingham of Sutton, and a pig and geese belonging to Martin Bieds.¹⁸ Needless to say when he was examined by John Stearne he was found to have 4 teates 'upon the entrance to his fundaments ... and that those 4 teates weare drawen & suckt by evill spirits'.¹⁹

Whether these findings bear out the research of other historians is difficult to say, as the sample used is relatively small. Certainly the link between the rise in the instances of women as witnesses or victims and the decline after the Restoration of allegations of stock damage against witches has been noted.²⁰ At first this would appear to be borne out by these figures, in that the majority of the victims alleging stock damage were men. However, if one were to discount the cases of bewitchment of stock and look at the gender differences between those victims who were personally bewitched then one would expect to find the position reversed, with more women as victims. In fact this is not the case. Of the 9 adults who were bewitched all but 2 were men: and both of these women were connected to male victims. One was the maid to Walter Mayes, a husbandman, who had been bewitched by Anne Disbarrow.²¹ Walter Mayes also had a horse bewitched by her. The other was Marie Salter, the infant daughter of Thomas (himself a witchcraft victim) and Gillian.²² At Ely, men were accusing witches not only of bewitching their property but also themselves. While it may have been true that the large number of cases of bewitchment of livestock would have resulted in a proportionate number of male

¹⁷ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 16.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., f. 18.

²⁰ C. Holmes, 'Witnesses and Witches', *Past and Present*, 140 (1993), pp. 45-56.

²¹ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 19.

²² Ibid., f. 11.

victims, this does not explain the preponderance of male victims who were personally bewitched. Also in none of these cases was the bewitchment of the person connected in any way to the bewitchment of livestock or property.

The large divergence between these figures and those of other findings may be explained by the fact that in relation to the indictments historians may not have separated those people who were merely endorsing the indictment from those who were confirmed victims of witchcraft. For witnesses, as opposed to those who were also shown as victims, the genders are in balance. Of the 28 witnesses from whom there are depositions at Ely, 15 were women and 13 men. As more of the accused were female more women than men were employed to search them for teats. 13 of the 15 women who gave evidence as witnesses did so in their capacity as searchers, testifying to the presence of teats.²³ The others, Gillian Slater and Alice Wade, merely corroborated evidence given by men.²⁴ Of the men, 3 had been employed as searchers (for the male witches) and also to watch over them. These included the professional witch hunter John Stearne, whose name appears as endorsing 3 of the depositions.²⁵ The other men generally corroborated the allegations made against many of the witches and sometimes gave direct evidence of conversations that took place in which the alleged witches incriminated themselves. William Shelly, for example, a butcher from Ely St. Marys, testified that Peter Burbush told him about 6 months prior to the trial how to become a witch. He was told that when receiving the sacrament at church to take the bread and keep it in his hand after he had drunk the wine. Then he should go out of the church with the bread in his hand, and 'piss ag[ains]t the church wall at which time he shall finde something like a toade or Frogge apearancee to receive the sd Bread. And after yt ye party should come to the knowledge how to be a witch'.²⁶ Apart from John Stearne, only one other man, Benjamin Wyne, appears as giving

²³ CUL, MSS E/12, ff. 1, 2, 4, 7, 11, 20.

²⁴ Ibid., f. 15.

²⁵ Ibid., ff. 17, 18, 21.

²⁶ Ibid., f. 12.

evidence against more than one suspected witch. Wyne provided depositions against two male witches, William Watson and John Bonham.²⁷

The Ely figures, in regard to the sex of witnesses in witchcraft cases, are borne out by the few records available for the sessions of the peace at Ipswich. Mathew Hopkins had conducted a witchcraft investigation here about a year before he went to Ely (between August to September, 1645). In the list of recognisants for the appearance of witnesses in witchcraft trials, all 8 of the witnesses summoned to give evidence against the suspected witches, Alice Denham and Mary Lakeland were men.²⁸ The testimony of female witnesses, on the other hand, seems to have been confined merely to that of searching the suspected witch for teats, in effect a procedural role.

Table 6: Sex of Victims and Witnesses (King's Lynn)

Sex	Victims	Witnesses
Male	0	13
Female	0	17
Total	0	30

Source: NRO, MS KL/C21/2, King's Lynn borough session minute books, 1639-55.

Such findings would appear to be borne out by other trials. Table 6 shows the gender breakdown of the witnesses for the trial conducted by Edward Robinson, the Mayor of King's Lynn, in 1646. Although the figures for the witnesses represent individuals, many of them gave evidence in more than one presentment. 3 of the female witnesses, who were most likely searchers, appear more than once. Mary Glasrow appears in 7 of the presentments, Ursula Bignett in 4 and Margaret Beecrest in 2. 3 of the men also appear more than once. Mathew Hopkins was shown as a witness in 3 of the cases, Roy Simons in 2 and John Law in 2.²⁹ Of the witnesses at Somerset, 5 of the women and 2 of the men were employed as searchers or watchers

²⁷ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 16.

²⁸ Su.RO, MSS C8/4/7, f. 71, sessions of the peace, 1625-49.

²⁹ NRO, MSS KL/C21/2, ff. 47-8.

of the suspected witches (see Table 7). Thus if we deduct these from the number of witnesses overall we find that there were 6 male and 3 female witnesses. This would suggest (as at Ely in 1647) that men were more likely to be involved in the allegations of witchcraft whereas women were more likely to be involved in the investigation. In addition the greater number of female victims at Somerset may be explained by the lower incidence of allegations of bewitching livestock and property. In most of these

Table 7: Sex of Victims and Witnesses (Somerset)

Sex	Victims	Witnesses
Male	5	8
Female	8	8
Total	13	16

Source: J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), pp. 127-197.

allegations the witches were accused of consorting with the devil or of bewitching individuals.

If men were being accused of witchcraft because of property disputes there still remains the problem of explaining why it was that women were also accused. One explanation was that women were especially vulnerable to these types of accusations, because there had always been a correlation between women and witchcraft, and women and magic. Often this was extremely tenuous, but it was widely believed women did have supernatural powers, even if they were not witches. For example, a host of magical belief was attached to menstruation. The eyes of a child in the cradle could be damaged if a woman who had ceased to menstruate looked at it.³⁰ Menstrual blood could be used as an ingredient for love potions or to help or hinder conception. If clothes with menstrual blood were washed in new milk and hung on a hedge then this would make the woman fruitful. If menstrual blood was applied to the 'natural

³⁰ *Albertus Magnus, De Secretis mulierum: or, The Mysteries of Humane Generation Fully Revealed*, trans. J. Quincey (London, 1725), p. 90.

place' it could hinder conception.³¹ It was also thought that a sympathetic link existed between a pregnant woman and her unborn child. Sir Kenelm Digby advised a pregnant woman not to apply 'patches' (a type of beauty spot) to her face, because he argued this would result in her child being born with a similar mark on its face. Despite following his advice, she was so worried (according to Digby) that her imagination caused her child to be born with a black spot on its forehead.³²

Although some historians have suggested such anecdotes may be taken as evidence that misogynistic attitudes were prevalent during the seventeenth century,³³ it would be a mistake to conclude misogyny was the sole reason for the persecution of witches. Works such as *Malleus Maleficarum* have frequently been quoted to show that witch hunts were manifestations of social misogyny, while local court records which demonstrate that many women were involved in the accusations against suspected witches have often been ignored.³⁴ However, there is a danger in assuming that the evidence to be found in court records is a reflection of society's attitude to a particular group. Just because the court records show that women were accusing other women of witchcraft does not necessarily mean that they were not acting under the directions of men. We should also be cautious in asserting that particular occupational groups, such as widows and spinsters, were being accused of witchcraft. At least one historian has pointed out the unreliability of taking at face value the information contained in assize records without corroboration from other sources.³⁵ Drawing any firm conclusions from such records about broad issues such as gender or

³¹ W. Sermon, *The ladies Companion: or, The English Midwife* (London, 1671), p. 13; L. Sowerby, *The Ladies Dispensatory* (London, 1652), p. 161. Both cited in P. Crawford, 'Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth Century England', *Past and Present*, 91 (1981).

³² K. Digby, *A Late Discovery*, pp. 102-4.

³³ B. Easlea, *Witchhunting, Magic and the New Philosophy*, pp. 8, 49, 243, 249.

³⁴ A point made by Professor Sharpe, who has stressed the error of ignoring local evidence. J. Sharpe, 'Witchcraft and women in seventeenth century England: some Northern evidence', *Continuity and Change*, 6 (2) (1991), 179-199, pp. 179-180.

³⁵ J. S. Cockburn, 'Early modern assize records as historical evidence', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 5 (1975); C. Z. Weiner, 'Is a Spinster An Unmarried Woman?', *American Journal of Legal History* vol. 20 (1976), pp. 27-31, argued that JPs were attempting to establish the culpability of married women by representing them as single.

the reasons why witches were prosecuted in the first place, should therefore always be made with caution. It is important, for example, to differentiate those women who were employed in procedural matters - the search of a witch - from those who were making independent allegations of witchcraft. At Ely it would appear that that the majority of women witnesses were in fact searchers who were acting under the directions of men.

The main difference between the King's Lynn figures (Table 6) and those from Ely (Table 4) is that there are no victims listed for King's Lynn. At King's Lynn all 9 suspects were charged with 'consulting, tending and meeting feloniously with evil spirits'.³⁶ If a witch was merely accused of consorting with an evil spirit, it was not necessary for the prosecutor to produce testimony from a maligned victim. Evidence of the witch's mark was often enough. In practice this would have made the job of Hopkins much easier. In such cases one would expect more women than men to be listed as witnesses, because the most important evidence for proving consorting with an evil spirit lay in the testimony that a suspected witch had teats. This is especially the case when, as they were at King's Lynn, most of the witches were female (see Table 3). However, given the fact that it was only necessary to prove consorting with the familiar, it remains to be explained why there were nearly as many men listed as witnesses in these examples as women. They were obviously not involved in the searching, so it appears they would have given evidence of watching the suspected witches to see if their familiars would come to them. Alternatively it may have been the case that the witches were charged with other offences, such as damaging livestock, but that these presentments were lost, or the cases had not been proceeded with. However, since the presentments are complete it does not seem likely such charges would be missing from the files. It therefore seems probable the male witnesses were giving evidence that they had seen the witch with a familiar, or were giving evidence about the alleged witch's previous bad character. Again these figures

³⁶ NRO, MSS KL/C 21/2, ff. 47-8.

would tend to run counter to the argument that the greater preponderance of male witnesses was due to the higher proportion of property offences alleged against the suspected witches, as none of the witches in these cases was charged with offences against property.

The lack of victims at King's Lynn would no doubt have presented some interesting problems for presiding justices and this may account for the high acquittal rate in these cases. Of the 9 witches presented at King's Lynn in 1646, 2 were found guilty, 5 acquitted and 1 respited.³⁷ Such evidence would at first seem to reinforce the view that in practice trial judges were not willing to convict accused witches unless they had bewitched someone to death.³⁸ Notwithstanding this may have been the case at King's Lynn, it still did not prevent the indictments being found *Billa Vera* (a true bill), and coming before the court in the first place. Indeed it was probably far simpler to prove the accused had made a compact with the devil by showing he was in possession of a familiar spirit, than proving a person had been bewitched by a suspected witch. When allegations of *Maleficium* reached the courts they were often far more inclined to change the charges to 'Devil Worship', especially if the accused witches fell into the hands of interested clergy or lawyers. It was easier on technical grounds to prove the existence of a compact than *Maleficium*.³⁹ 4 years later at King's Lynn 4 more witches were accused of witchcraft, only one of whom, Dorothy Hallowes, was found guilty. The other 3: Alice Scott, Anne Jubbs and Ann Moulton were all acquitted, despite being accused of bewitching people to death. It is significant that Dorothy Hallowes, in addition to being charged with bewitching John Patterndale to death, was the only one of the 4 accused who had also been charged with having a familiar spirit.⁴⁰

³⁷ NRO, MSS KL/C 21/2, ff. 47-8.

³⁸ C. Holmes, 'Popular Culture? Witches, Magistrates and Divines in Early Modern England', in S. L. Kaplan, ed., *Understanding Popular Culture* (London, 1984), p. 87; C. Holmes, 'Women: Witnesses and Witches', *Past and Present*, 140 (Aug. 193), p. 49. Holmes' assertion seems to have been based on only one source: R. Filmer, *An Advertisement* (London, 1653).

³⁹ R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen*, pp. 234-41, on the difficulties of getting proof.

⁴⁰ NRO, MSS KL/C 21/2, unnumbered 'May 1650'.

Table 8: Instances of Witchcraft (Great Yarmouth)

Offence	Number	Guilty	Not guilty
Consorting with an evil spirit	8	5	3
Act of <i>Maleficium</i>	6	1	5
Total	14	6	8

Source: NRO MSS Y/S1/2, ff. 93, 195-200, Great Yarmouth borough records.

In fact many indictments were passed and witches actually convicted merely for invoking spirits. Of the 6 witches found guilty and hanged at the Great Yarmouth Borough Sessions in 1646, 5 had been found guilty only of consorting with evil spirits (see Table 8). Only one, Elizabeth Bradwell, had been found guilty of causing harm. Additionally, it was often the case that if a suspected witch was accused of bewitching another person, then there was usually a secondary charge of consorting with spirits.⁴¹ Thus when Mary Vervy of Great Yarmouth was tried on 3 counts of witchcraft in August 1646, all involving the bewitchment of various infants in the neighbourhood, she was charged separately with consorting.⁴² These findings in Norfolk would support those conducted in Essex: of the 28 known indictments for entertaining evil spirits 18 came from the Hopkins witch hunt of 1645-6.⁴³ The mention of familiar spirits as the sole charge against a suspected witch, was probably due to Mathew Hopkins.

As regards the marital status of those accused of witchcraft this has been slightly more difficult to determine. Table 9 shows the marital status of accused witches at Ely. Of the 8 for whom there is no indication of marital status, 2 are mentioned as having children, which would indicate they were either widows or single parents, because had they been married, this would almost certainly have been mentioned. Of the 7 who were married, 4 were jointly accused husbands and wives, John and

⁴¹ NRO, MS Y/S1/2, ff. 199-200. There were 2 other suspected witches, Barbara Wilkinson and Nazerath Fassett, both of Great Yarmouth, who were likewise charged solely with consorting with evil spirits, but were found not guilty.

⁴² Ibid., ff. 197-8.

⁴³ A. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft*, p. 139.

Bridgett Bonham, and Robert and Dorothy Ellis.⁴⁴ The accusation against the suspected witch John Bonham is particularly interesting because both he and his wife made cross-allegations against each other. According to one Charles Lamb of Sutton, John Bonham had told him his wife had a familiar spirit which sucked on her body and sometimes sucked on his. However, when his wife was apprehended she testified that although she was not a witch, her husband certainly was and had a familiar spirit that sucked from his body.⁴⁵ Needless to say this marital squabble resulted in both being committed for trial for witchcraft. Although the result of this case, in common with all the others is not given, it is likely they would have been found guilty and hanged, given the fact that John Bonham, when examined, admitted he had made a contract with the devil and commanded his spirits to kill the horses of Robert Weacocke, the cattle of Goodman Burdells the Baker and Charles Freeman the thatcher.⁴⁶

Table 9: Marital Status of Witches (Ely)

Witches	Number
Married	7
Widowed	2
Not known	8
Total	17

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, Ely assize files.

With Robert and Dorothy Ellis the allegations against them appear to have stemmed initially from the admission made by Dorothy which then resulted in Robert being searched for teates by John Stearne. She admitted to being visited by a devil in the likeness of a cat 30 years before the trial, and having allowed this cat to suck upon her body. She then sent it to bewitch some cattle belonging to Thomas Hitchell 'which Catel presently died'. She also admitted to sending her spirit to kill Mary, the

⁴⁴ CUL, MSS E/12, ff. 9, 11, 18, 22.

⁴⁵ Ibid., f. 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., f. 22.

daughter of Thomas Salter of Stretham, and laming the mother of this child. It is hardly surprising, given the admissions made by Dorothy, that her husband was detained by Stearne and searched for marks. 4 'teates' were found on him and during the trial it was alleged that he had been suspected a witch for 20 years. However, he vehemently denied the allegations in court saying that he would not confess to being a witch even if 'they pul[le]d him [to] peeces wi[t]h wild horses'.⁴⁷

The Salter family seem to have been particularly familiar with witchcraft allegations, as their names crop up in a separate set of depositions, this time when a Robert Salter accused his mother-in-law, Jane Salter, of bewitching his crops of wheat. Quite what the relationship was between Robert Salter and the Thomas Salter mentioned in the Ellis depositions, has been impossible to ascertain. However, it seems likely that the allegations of witchcraft were the result of a long-standing dispute between the in-laws within the family. Apparently Jane Salter had sent her daughter Elizabeth Webb to Goodman Harper's pond for water. She had got lost and instead collected water from the 'widdow Baron's' pond and used this to ferment some wheat which was placed in a bucket by Robert Salter's house. When he had gone to collect it in the morning 'the wheat Boiled so fast that this Informant had much a doe to keepe it in the pott there being no fyer in the house'. When he had asked Jane why this had happened she explained it was because her daughter had collected water from the wrong pond. However, what really seems to have convinced him that Jane was a witch was that he had later seen her 'gowing from his house att the lanes end a black horse came to hir & Crept betwixt hir leggs & Carride hir over the Green to hir own house'. Robert Salter was convinced that this was 'the divell in the likeness of a horse'.⁴⁸

Tensions with in-laws may also have been behind the allegation of witchcraft made by Jeremie Briggs against his mother-in-law, Joan Briggs. He deposed that she had bewitched his cattle and horses about 7 years previously 'which had died suddenly

⁴⁷ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 18.

⁴⁸ Ibid., f. 20.

they being very well over night & found dead in the next morning & other some of his horses would lye in a most strange manner beating there heads agayst the Ground until they died'. He also claimed that she had been responsible for the death of one of his children 4 years before 'which had layd in a most grevous tormenting manner shriking & Crying out tearing the fleshe untill it died'. The dispute had obviously been a long-standing one, as Jeremie Briggs admitted in court that he had 'many Fallens out & the said Jane hath us[e]d many threatening speches ag[ain]st this Informant she having been a woman that hath a long tyme been suspected for a witch'.⁴⁹

Perhaps the most intriguing case at Ely concerns that of Adam Sabie. He was obviously unpopular with his Haddenham neighbours, because Stearne tells us that the reason he had detained the suspected witch in the first place was he had been 'desired by the Inhabitants of Haddenham to search the body of Adam Sabie'. In addition John Kirbie testified that he had been bewitched by Sabie following an argument. As well as this 'he had Bollocks which did suddenly & most strangely die & that his Child was taken lame & Continued so for the space of a yeare all which he Conceaveth was done by Adam Sabie by reason he Confesseth himselfe to have familiar spirits'.⁵⁰ It seems that Sabie's alleged confession to having a 'familiar' spirit was true because although his deposition contains a fairly detailed denial of witchcraft he does at the same time admit to meeting with a spirit. About 35 years before the trial there appeared to him a spirit in the likeness of a child, who spoke to him 'Feare not Sabie I am thy God'. He was led into the town of Haddenham and told by the spirit that he would live there until 1636. During that year he was again visited by the same spirit, this time in a 'flame of Fyor'. Again he was told to 'fear not ... for I am thy God'. The spirit then told him to go to the house of Lady Sandys who would give him £20, which she did.

He further confessed that the spirit

remained in his Body the space of 12 yeares & divers tyme doth speake to this ex[amina]t & doth feed this ex[aminan]t & comes & give this ex[aminan]t a prick upon his lip which when this ex[aminan]t sucketh he receiveth greate Nurishment w[h]ich this ex[aminan]t Conceaveth

⁴⁹ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., f. 17.

preserveth his life & the said spirit speakes unto hime & saith Adam I
am thy god & feare not ... for all thy wrongs shal be righted.⁵¹

It has been impossible to trace Sabie through any other records, but his signature on his deposition certainly indicates he was a literate man. Concerning Lady Sandys, who had paid him the £20, this lady resided at the Rectory at Wilburton, which parish adjoined Haddenham. The rectory had been appropriated to the Archdeacons of Ely, and was once their country seat, but in 1632 was rented to Sir Miles Sandys.⁵² The similarity between the names is too great to ignore and it seems likely that this accusation stemmed from some dispute within the family. The case demonstrates how both rich and poor alike were made to suffer under witchcraft.

Like the outbreak at Ely, family tensions and squabbles seem to have proliferated amongst the participants of the trial in Somerset in 1664. When the suspected witch Christine Green was examined, she explained she had been persuaded to make a compact with the devil by her sister-in-law, the widow Catherine Green (alias Cornish). They had attended a Sabbath where they had baptised a wax doll in the name of Elizabeth, the wife of Andrew Cornish, and then stuck thorns in it. In addition to bewitching this obvious relative, Catherine Green was also alleged to have bewitched her mother-in-law to death. The same group, along with an Alice Green then bewitched Richard Green who was taken ill and died. To add further confusion to all this, a Mary Green, a spinster from Brewham, provided evidence that she had seen the suspected witches all attending a Sabbath together. Unfortunately, it has been quite impossible to unravel the family tree involved here, but the case demonstrates the long-standing tensions that may well have been simmering under the surface for years, which then bubbled up when accusations of witchcraft were flying about.⁵³

There is no reference to the age of the accused witches on any of the Ely depositions, but it is possible to make a reasonable guess with some of them.

⁵¹ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 17.

⁵² C. E. Parsons, *Cambridge Antiquarian Society's Communications* (1915), Vol. xix, p. 33.

⁵³ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 162-4.

Although there were two widows accused of witchcraft, Anne Greene and Joan Rigg, it would be a mistake to assume they were elderly, though certainly one can say they were at least of marriageable age and therefore adults. Of the remainder one can gain a more accurate indication of their age from the testimony of their reputations. Peter Burbush, for example, had for a long time been accounted a witch.⁵⁴ Ellen Caryson had been suspected a witch for 20 years.⁵⁵ Dorothy Ellis admitted to making a compact with the devil 30 years previously and her husband Robert was thought to have been a witch for 20 years.⁵⁶ Tomerson Read admitted to being a witch for 16 years,⁵⁷ Adam Sabie for 35 years⁵⁸ and William Watson for 30 years.⁵⁹ Taking all these factors into account one can say that at least 10 of the 17 accused witches at Ely must have been at least 40 years old, with every likelihood that they were much older.

As regards the ages of the victims, again it is difficult to estimate with any degree of certainty. It is possible only to separate the children from the adults. There is only one deposition that supplies the ages of the victims and that is the bewitchment by Ellen Caryson of the two children of Robert and Katherine Parsons. The ages of the children in that case are given as 7 years and 23 weeks respectively.⁶⁰ A further deposition, that of Alice Wade, mentions her 'baby' being bewitched by Dorothy Ellis.⁶¹ Of the remainder, although it is not possible to estimate their ages, one can say whether they were children or not. It was usual in court presentments to describe a witness, victim or accused by his or her occupation. In those cases where the victim has no occupation listed, but is instead shown as 'son of' or 'daughter of', then it is likely he or she was a child. Using this criterion it is possible to make a rough guess

⁵⁴ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 12.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ff. 1, 44.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, (unnumbered folio) 'examination of Dorothy Ellis'.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 11.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 16.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 44.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, f. 15.

at the ratio of children to adults who were directly bewitched. There were 7 children and 9 adults. Of those bewitched it was children who were far more likely to have been bewitched to death, as opposed to having been 'consumed', made lame or suffered from fits. As can be seen from Table 10 out of the 16 human victims of witchcraft at Ely, 5 died. Of these 5, 4 were children. There is nothing surprising here as the higher mortality figures amongst children are a reflection of the higher incidence of infant mortality for the period as a whole.⁶² However, it is important to bear in mind that at Ely the majority of cases of witchcraft concerned the bewitchment of livestock. If we include the owners of bewitched livestock as victims, then the proportion of adult victims to child victims becomes much higher - 28 to 7.

As with the Ely depositions the age of the witches at King's Lynn is not shown, however their marital status is disclosed in all cases except one. 5 of the females were listed as widows, one as a spinster and one as the wife of a carpenter. Of the two men, one was shown as a labourer and the other had no occupation listed.⁶³ Likewise 3 of the 5 accused witches at Somerset in 1664 were described as widows, one a wife and the other had no description.⁶⁴ The number of widows would tend to suggest, as in the

Table 10: Manifestation of Bewitchment in Human Victims (Ely)

	Adult	Child	Total
Died	1	4	5
Fits	3	0	3
Lame	2	1	3
Consumed	1	0	1
Bewitched	2	2	4
Total	9	7	16

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, Ely assize files.

⁶² E. A. Wrigley & R. S. Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871* (London, 1981), pp. 248-9 estimate a 25% child mortality rate up to the age of 10.

⁶³ SRO, MSS C 21/2, ff. 47-8.

⁶⁴ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 162-4.

other findings, that most of the women were certainly adults, possible elderly.

It is almost impossible to achieve a useful breakdown of the occupations of the

Table 11: Literacy of Witches and Victims (Ely)

	Signed name	Left mark	No signature
Witch	1	15	1
Victim	3	11	0
Searcher	0	6	12
Witness	7	4	0
Total	11	36	13

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, Ely assize files.

victims or the witches. At Ely, the depositions only very sporadically recorded occupations. Of the adult victims there was 1 gentleman, 1 weaver, 1 'mettleman', 1 miller, 1 yeoman, 1 labourer and 2 husbandmen mentioned. These are obviously too few to draw any firm conclusions or comparisons with other findings. However, some indication of a person's status can be determined by his or her literacy. This can be ascertained by the number who signed their name on the deposition rather than leaving their mark. As can be seen from Table 11, out of the 14 victims, 3 signed their names, while 11 left their mark. 6 of the searchers left their mark, while the remainder failed to sign their names at all. Of the 11 witnesses who were not victims or searchers, 7 signed their names while 4 left their marks. Of the witches, all but one, Adam Sabie, left their mark, although one witch - Caryson - never gave a deposition.

Table 12: Literacy Figures for Diocese of Norwich, 1580-1700

Occupation	No. Sampled	No. mark	% mark
Clergy/profession	332	0	0
Gentry	450	9	2
Yeoman	944	330	35
Tradesmen	1,838	809	44
Husbandmen	1,198	946	79
Servants	28	23	82
Labourers	88	75	85
Women	1,024	911	89

Source: D. Cressy, *Literacy and social order* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 119.

Having established the literacy figures for all those involved in the Ely witch trials, one can then use these figures to make a tentative estimate as to their occupational groups by utilising the research of demographic historians. Table 12 shows the literacy figures in the diocese of Norwich from 1580 to 1700.⁶⁵ Not surprisingly the highest incidence of illiteracy occurred amongst women, then labourers, servants and husbandmen. We can now combine these findings with the literacy figures of those involved in the witchcraft trial at Ely. Table 11 showing the majority of those involved were illiterate may suggest that they were either labourers, servants or husbandmen. Of these groups, the latter occupation seems the most likely amongst the victims of witchcraft at least, as 24 of the victims lost livestock, mostly cattle, and were therefore propertied. However, such conclusions must remain tenuous.

Without the benefit of having the indictment against the witches it is difficult to ascertain whether they were charged with possessing evil spirits or not. However, a number of the depositions mention the watching of suspected witches to see if their familiars would come to them, and nearly all of them were searched for teats. Table 13 shows the results of these testimonies at Ely. Out of the 17 witches listed, 9 were found to have teats on their bodies. However, there was only one case in which a familiar was witnessed by the searchers, a beetle that was seen to come into the room where Ellen Caryson was being watched.⁶⁶ In addition, 5 of the suspected witches admitted to possessing a familiar when examined in court.

If one now compares these findings with Table 14, which shows the numbers of suspected witches who admitted their guilt, one sees that the number of witches who admitted to having familiars correlates exactly with the number who admitted their guilt when examined. Perhaps it should be expected that the 5 witches who admitted

⁶⁵ D. Cressy, *Literacy and social order, reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 73, 121, 119.

⁶⁶ CUL MSS E/12, f. 2.

Table 13: Admission of Guilt (Ely)

	Number
Confessed in court to justices	5
Denied the allegation	11
No deposition available	1
Total	17

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, Ely assize files.

they had made compacts with the devil and sent their imps to cause harm to others would have admitted they had possessed familiars. Unfortunately, the case in which a familiar was seen by the searchers, that of Ellen Caryson, was one for which there are no depositions available from the suspected witch and so it has been impossible to ascertain whether such testimony coincided with an admission of guilt on the part of the suspected witch. However, all 9 of the suspected witches who were found to have teats denied their guilt in court. Of even greater significance was the fact that none of the 5 witches who admitted their guilt was described by any of the witnesses in the depositions as having been searched or having any teats. This would suggest that the evidence of finding the teats was provided only after the testimony of the suspected witch was known. In other words, once it was known the suspected witch would deny his or her guilt, it became necessary to locate some incriminating marks on his or her body in order to assist a conviction. In the case of those who admitted their guilt

Table 14: Incidence of Familiars (Ely)

	Number
Familiar & teats witnessed by watcher	1
Teats witnessed by watcher	9
Possession of familiar admitted by witch	5
No witness account available	2
Total	17

Source: CUL, MSS E/12, Ely assize files.

this would not have been necessary. Of course such a conclusion should be tempered with caution. It may have been the case that the evidence from witnesses against these 5 may have been so overwhelming, a search for teats would not have been necessary. However, these findings would seem to indicate that the testimony of the searchers was instigated by those conducting the investigation and was most likely a fabrication or a case of what is now called 'noble-cause corruption'.⁶⁷ It is possible that the investigators believed the accused witches were guilty and therefore felt justified in ensuring that the proof was available in order to secure their conviction. We know that Stearne was involved because he was mentioned as a searcher in 3 of the cases. In addition, although Hopkins was not shown as a witness in any of the cases, it is almost certain he was present, supervising the investigation. When Richard Denton gave his evidence concerning the suspected witch Ellen Caryson, he stated that he was instructed to watch her, along with the Constable of Upwell and 3 others, 'by the direction of Mathew Hopkins'.⁶⁸ At King's Lynn Hopkins was directly mentioned as a witness in 3 of the cases. Thus it appears more likely in the Ely prosecutions, that he delegated much of the investigation and organisation of the witch hunting to his henchman John Stearne. Stearne was directly mentioned on a number of occasions in the depositions, and also gave evidence himself.

While Hopkins was the catalyst for the witch craze in south-east England between 1645-7, his task would have been virtually impossible without the assistance of an army of willing henchmen. It seems logical to assume that a number of local people were recruited to assist in the investigation and interrogation of the accused witches. Indeed the local recruitment of helpers was probably one of the unique factors in a witchcraft trial. One of the most important ways in which the local population could influence a trial for witchcraft was not in the evidence the victim of

⁶⁷ A phrase coined by the media to describe the doctoring of evidence by police officers in order to convict someone they believe to be guilty.

⁶⁸ CUL, E/12, f. 2.

Table 15: Place of Origin of Searchers (Ely)

	Number of witnesses
Witnesses living in same town as accused	20
Witness living in different town	1
Unknown	7
Total	28

Source: CUL, E/12, Ely assize files.

witchcraft may have given that he or she was bewitched, but in the actual investigative side of the witchcraft allegation. Because many of those involved in the searching or watching of the suspects were local, this would no doubt have ensured they were already hostile towards the suspected witch. The informations in the Ely assize files for 1645 are filled with such testimonies. Table 15 shows the number of witnesses at the Ely Assizes who originated from the same town as the suspected witch whom they were testifying against. The table does not include the victims of the witchcraft, whom one would expect to come from the same vicinity, instead it shows those who were involved in the searching or watching of the suspected witch, or those who simply gave evidence of the witch's character. The suspected witch Ellen Caryson of Upwell was searched by Ann Morise, the midwife Anne Clarke and Anne Savory of Upwell.⁶⁹ Likewise the Littleport witch Ann Greene was searched by Elizabeth Crab, Lea Woddlathe and Ann Alexander, themselves all from Littleport.⁷⁰ Tommerson Read of Haddenham was searched by Ellen Pope, also from Haddenham.⁷¹ Robert Ellis was searched by Thomas Hitch and Rowland Taylor, all three men coming from the Isle of Ely.⁷² Annie Gotoles, Alice Hayward, Jane Hopkins, Ellen Granter and Marie Salmon of Stretham searched Jane Salter who came from the same village.⁷³ Only one

⁶⁹ CUL, E/12, ff. 1-2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., f. 4.

⁷¹ Ibid., f. 11.

⁷² Ibid., f. 18.

⁷³ Ibid., f. 20.

witness, John Stearne, originated from a wholly different vicinity to the witches, but this is hardly surprising as it was probably he who recruited the witnesses in the first place.

Another advantage of recruiting searchers locally was that they were in a far better position to testify to the previous character of the suspected witch than an outsider. Ann Morise, one of the searchers of the suspected witch Ellen Caryson, testified at the Ely trial that Ellen had been 'a longe tyme accompted a witche and her Mother before her, and that shee is a Common Curser'.⁷⁴ Another searcher, Ellen Pope, testified to the previous character of the suspected witch Tommerson Read by relating her conversation and subsequent admission of entering into a contract with the Devil. While she was conducting the search, she was told by Read that the devil had appeared to her 16 years ago 'in the likeness of a Muse and prickt hir in the thigh'. After this the devil appeared to her a second time and 'demanded of hir hir childe or els hir blood & presently the divele gave the said Tomison a prick or nip upon the breast & the spirit mus suckt hir blood'. In this example, the searcher is not only testifying to the finding of teats on the suspected witch, but also seems to have been acting as an interrogator.⁷⁵

Similar patterns can be found in the witch trial at Somerset in 1664. There were two groups of alleged witches, one from the parishes of Wincanton and Stoke Trister, and the other from Brewham. All three of these parishes are situated in the south east of Somerset, on the border with Dorset. Wincanton and Stoke Trister are neighbouring parishes and the parish of Brewham is separated from the other two by the parish of Charlton Musgrove. Thus all the parties involved lived in relatively close proximity to each other. Moreover, it would appear this witchcraft outbreak represented a fairly isolated incident as there were no other recorded outbreaks of witchcraft persecution in other parts of Somerset during this period. Although there were two distinct groups of witches, the *modus operandi* of both groups was very

⁷⁴ CUL, E/12, f. 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid., f. 11.

Table 16: Place of Origin of Searchers (Somerset)

	Number of Witnesses
Witness living in same town as accused	9
Witness living in different town	0
Unknown	0
Total	9

Source: J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681), pp. 143–45.

similar, and in view of the close geographic proximity of the two groups, it would seem likely that the outbreak was in fact one rather than two persecutions. Like the outbreak at Ely, the searchers employed to watch and examine the witches accused at Somerset were recruited locally (See Table 16) and appear to have given evidence of the previous character of the accused witches. Of the searchers 8 came from the parish of Brewham and 1 from Stoke Trister.⁷⁶

The validity of the confessions of the witches could be further strengthened if one of the local witnesses was a clergyman. This was the case with the corroborating testimony provided by William Parsons, the Rector of Stoke Trister, who stressed that the confession of Elizabeth Styles was:

free and unforced, without any torturing or watching, drawn from her by a gentle Examination, meeting with the Convictions of a guilty conscience ... she confeseth further, That the Devil useth to suck her in the Poll, about four a Clock in the Morning in the Form of a Fly.⁷⁷

Again further corroboration of the final part of his testimony is supplied by the watchers, Nicholas Lambert, William Thick and William Read. Whilst watching Styles, they saw at about 3 in the morning ‘a glistening bright fly, about an inch in length, which pitched at first in the chimney, and then vanished’. When they questioned her about this she confessed it was her familiar and she had felt it tickle her ‘poll’. She further confessed this was the usual time when her familiars came to

⁷⁶ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 143–5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 142–3.

her. Likewise the searchers, Catherine White, Mary Day, Mary Bolster and Bridget Prankard all testified to the finding of an insensible mark in her 'poll'.⁷⁸

Of course it should be borne in mind that the Somerset testimonies are all hearsay, in the sense that we only have Glanvill's word that he transcribed them from the original records made by Richard Hunt. Unfortunately, the Quarter Sessions records for Taunton do not survive for this period. However, it has been possible to confirm the identity of many of those who took part in the trial, and this offers some corroboration of the validity of Glanvill's claims. The existence of the Rector of Stoke Trister, William Parsons, can be confirmed from the entry shown in the 1670 Stoke Trister Hearth Tax Returns. Similarly, one of the watchers involved in the case, Nicholas Lambert, was rated at 1s. in 1664. Another, William Thick, is listed as a churchwarden and rated at 2s. in 1664. One of the victims of Styles, Margaret Vining, is mentioned in 1670 along with her husband, Richard.⁷⁹ Of the witches themselves there is no trace in any local records. However, since the Hearth Tax returns were compiled after the date of their execution one would not have expected to find them listed. Unfortunately the parish records for Stoke Trister do not survive prior to 1751, therefore it has been impossible to trace any records of the birth or death of the witches. The records for the neighbouring parishes of Cucklington, Charlton Musgrave and Wincanton show no trace of the witches executed in this trial. There is an entry in the parish register for neighbouring Cucklington recording the marriage of Peter Newman on 27 March 1665, who could be the Peter Newman bewitched by Alice Duke, but it would be impossible to say this with any certainty.⁸⁰

One unusual feature of the Somerset examinations, as compared with those from other trials, was that both groups of witches confessed to attending Sabbaths presided over by the devil. When Elizabeth Style was examined she mentioned she

⁷⁸ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 143-7.

⁷⁹ SRO, *Somerset Hearth Tax Returns*, ed. Dwelly, entries for 1664-5, 1670.

⁸⁰ SRO, MSS DP Cuck. 2/1/1-2, parish records for Cucklington.

had attended a meeting where there were 13 others present, 8 men and 5 women.⁸¹ However, it is likely these were merely malicious allegations on the part of either the witch or the interrogator, for the allegation made by Style that 13 other witches were present at the Sabbath is highly suspect. Although it may have been generally believed the number of witches in a coven was 13, if one were to include Styles in this number, then there would have been 14 present. Thus it would appear that a clash may have occurred between the popular conception of witchcraft and the reality of the actual confessions. Either she or her interrogator had got a bit muddled here, as it would seem likely they had intended to portray a meeting of 13 witches but failed to get their sums right. Although the once fashionable idea that there existed in England an organised pagan cult of devil worshippers who met in covens of 13 has been effectively squashed, this did not mean such groups did not exist in people's imagination.⁸²

The beliefs of the interrogator or witnesses that witches attended covens and met the devil were often directly mirrored in the confession of the witches. Elizabeth Styles confessed she had first met the devil 10 years beforehand in the shape of a handsome man, and afterwards as a black dog. He had promised her she would live well for 12 years if she would sign her soul away in blood on a piece of paper. She agreed and had her fourth finger on her right hand pricked, and signed the paper with an 'O'. The devil then gave her 6d. and vanished with the paper. The inclusion of a demonic pact signed in blood might also indicate the suspected witch had been interrogated by a witch hunter, although it must be remembered that such beliefs were deeply enshrined in English folklore at this time and therefore a conclusion based solely on this evidence must remain tenuous. However, it is a truism that all the suspected witches who confessed their guilt in this trial admitted to making a pact in

⁸¹ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 139.

⁸² Margaret Murray, utilising much of the Somerset material, argued that this was evidence of the existence of a pagan cult in England: M. A. Murray, *The witch cult in Western Europe* (Oxford, 1921), pp. 19-28. Keith Thomas rightly points out that there is little or no evidence in the court records to show that there existed in England an organised pagan cult of devil worshippers who met in covens of 13: K. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 614-6.

an almost identical way. Two other witches, Alice Duke and Catherine Green, both confessed they signed their souls away with their own blood, and were then pricked in their fingers, in an identical manner to that described in the information of Styles.⁸³ If the confessions had been freely given one would have expected to find some differences in the testimonies. In addition they all confessed to attending a Sabbath at night on the village common near Trister Gate, where they met with a man in black clothes.

Figure 10: The Rendezvous of Witches at Trister Gate (Wincanton)



Source: J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1683).

Although the Somerset witches did not have far to travel to their alleged Sabbaths, they still confessed to being able to fly magically to them. Elizabeth Styles confessed that her group of witches had been carried to their meetings by anointing their heads with a special oil given to them by their familiars. They were to use the words: 'Thout, tout a tout, throughout and about'. When they were to leave their meetings they were to say, 'Rentum Tormentum'.⁸⁴ Of course the belief that witches could fly great distances in order to attend their sabbaths was enshrined in popular folklore. However, written evidence of witches flying on broomsticks was rare in

⁸³ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, pp. 133-143.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

Figure 11: Witches Flying on Broomsticks



The earliest known picture of witches flying on broomsticks (about 1440) from a French manuscript.

Source: M. Le Franc, *Le Champion des dames* (c.1440), cited in R. H. Robbins, *The Encyclopaedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York, 1972), p. 30.

England. Glanvill mentioned one such case when the suspected witch Julian Cox was questioned at the Taunton Assizes in 1663. She confessed that one evening she had seen 3 persons riding towards her on broomsticks: 'Two of them she formerly knew, which was a Witch and a Wizzard that were hanged for Witchcraft several years before'. The third, who she did not know, was a man in black who tempted her to give her soul to the devil, but she refused.⁸⁵ By contrast such accounts of sabbaths seem to be absent from the Ely material. Perhaps this was because the Somerset account was hearsay: a popular account written by Glanvill for a mass audience familiar with such stories. The Ely material, on the other hand, is an exact transcription of the trial records and thus relates more strongly to the reality of the witchcraft accusation. There are other cases of Sabbath-like meetings mentioned in

⁸⁵ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 194.

records in England, but they are few and far between. The deposition of Martha Hurrell, to the Chelmsford magistrates in 1645, was one example. Hurrell deposed that between Easter and Michaelmas 1643 she had met with others 'for the purpose of conjuration, lechery and magic'.⁸⁶ Mathew Hopkins also described how he uncovered a meeting of witches at his home town of Manningtree (Figure 3). In March 1644 he

Figure 12: Mathew Hopkins and Elizabeth Clarke



The witches Elizabeth Clarke and Anne Leach with their familiar spirits.

Source: BL, TT E 388 (2), M. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1647).

had claimed that 7 or 8 witches living in Manningtree, together with others living in adjacent towns, met every 6 weeks (always on a Friday night) and had 'their severall

⁸⁶ ERO, MSS Q/SR, 324/118, Deposition of Martha Hurrell.

solemne sacrifices there offered to the Devill'.⁸⁷ This meeting appeared to be confirmed by the account of the confessions of various witches at the Chelmsford assizes in 1645. Anne Leech confessed to meeting with Elizabeth Gooding and Anne West at the home of Elizabeth Clarke, 'where there was a book read, wherein she thinks there was no goodnesse'.⁸⁸ Also Rebecca West confessed that together with Anne Leech, Elizabeth Gooding, Hellen Clarke and Anne West she had met at the home of Elizabeth Clarke to pray to her familiars.⁸⁹ Thus the chief characteristics of such meetings were secrecy and privacy, often attended at the home of one of the witches. Even the Somerset case, in which the suspected witches admitted to attending an outdoor meeting and worshipping the devil, seems to have been pretty tame by comparison to the popular portrayal of such scenes. There were no sacrifices of babies or wild orgiastic scenes. Instead English witches between 1640-70 seemed content to stick some thorns into some wax dolls, and sit down to a meal of beef and beer.

One other unusual aspect of English witchcraft trials during this period was the use suspected witches made of sorcery in order to cast their spells. This is something often overlooked when examining English trials, as it is frequently assumed witches were simply accused of making compacts with the devil and sending their familiar spirits to cause harm to others. In fact there are many cases which demonstrate how witches actually took part in rituals or cast magical spells on those whom they wished to harm. The Somerset cases in particular show that English witches were believed to perform acts of sorcery to achieve their ends, as opposed to merely muttering some malediction. When the accused witches met at their alleged sabbaths, they were said to have brought with them 'wax pictures' which were then baptised in the name of the person whom they wished to harm. Then, it was said, the 'man in black' and the others present would stick thorns in the wax pictures. After this they danced and 'had

⁸⁷ Hopkins, *Discovery*, p. 2.

⁸⁸ BL, TT E 296 (35), *A true and exact Relation of the Severall Informations*, p. 9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

Wine, Cakes and Roastmeat (all brought by the man in black) which they did eat and drink'.⁹⁰

At other times they were given an apple by the devil in order to bewitch their victims. The use of an apple in order to cause harm seems to be a recurring theme in English witchcraft cases. Often it would be used as a component in sorcery in order to bewitch a person. When Jane Brooks of Shepton Mallet was tried at Castle Cary in 1657, 7 years prior to this outbreak, she had been accused of bewitching Richard Jones of Shepton Mallet by giving him an apple and stroking him down the right side. Soon after he had fallen ill.⁹¹ One seventeenth century manuscript details how a person could take a needle which had been used to sew a dead body in a sheet, and then prick an apple with it. This could then be given to a maid or young woman and it would immediately cause her to cease to menstruate and to become 'crook'd and lamed'.⁹² One explanation for this might be that the giving of an apple had biblical connotations, representing as it did to many the tool by which Eve was tempted into sin by the devil.⁹³ Alternatively, it may have been a genuine case of poisoning, either deliberate or accidental.

An analysis of one of the Somerset cases - Elizabeth Styles of Stoke Trister - illustrates many of the factors discussed, including the attendance at the sabbath and the use of sorcery to do harm to another. The 13 year old daughter of Richard Hill of Stoke Trister had been suffering from fits for 2 months, and during the fits had told her father and the others who were present, that Elizabeth Styles had appeared to her and was responsible for tormenting her. She often described the clothes that Styles was wearing, and when this was checked it was found to be true. When her father confronted Styles, some friends of the suspected witch - Frances White and Walter and Robert Thick - advised her to complain to the JP. She said that 'she would do

⁹⁰ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 138.

⁹¹ J. Glanvill, *A Philosophical Endeavour*, p. 126.

⁹² BL Sloane MSS 1783, f. 71.

⁹³ Gen. 3:6.

worse than fetch a warrant', after which the girl's fits grew worse than before. In addition, when Richard Hill's daughter was examined, the examiners found 'holes made in the Hand-wrists, Face, Neck, and other parts of her Body, which the Informants and others that saw them conceived to be with Thorns in her Flesh, and some they hooked out'. As soon as the child could speak, she said she had been pricked by widow Styles.⁹⁴ The same type of injuries also befell Agnes Vining, the wife of Richard Vining of Stoke Trister, who suffered from 'a grievous pricking in her Thigh'. Such injuries would have been completely consistent with the alleged *modus operandi* of the witch, with the sticking of thorns into wax dolls representing the victims. In addition Agnes Vining testified she had been given an apple by Styles and had fallen ill soon after, thus corroborating the examination of Elizabeth Style.⁹⁵

Unfortunately the more detailed depositions from Ely, while often mentioning that suspected witches cursed their victims by muttering some malediction which was then followed by misfortune, lack any examples of significant acts of sorcery or conjuration. There are no mentions of sabbaths, or of making wax images. However, the curse uttered by the suspected witches often contained elements of the ritual or of deliberate incantation. When Robert Parson testified to the bewitchment of his wife Ellen Caryson, he said the suspected witch 'clapte her hand upon the table & swears twice or thrice she would make her glad to have her pigg'.⁹⁶ In this case the witness stressed the clapping of the hand and the repetition of the curse as if it indicated some type of spell. Likewise when Alice Wade testified to the bewitchment of her baby, she said that Dorothy Ellis layed 'her hand upon the Childs Cheeke [and] mumbled certaine words to hir selfe' after which the child fell ill.⁹⁷ In this case the curse or spoken words had not been shouted in anger, but had been accompanied by touching.

⁹⁴ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 129.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁹⁶ CUL, MSS E/12, f. 44.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 15.

Although allegations of sorcery did not overtly appear in the Ely indictments, they were at least implicit in other depositions in south-eastern England during the 1640s. 9 out of 20 of the indictments for witchcraft in the Great Yarmouth borough sessions for 1646 mention that the suspected witch 'practised witchcraft and sorcery'.⁹⁸ In addition the octogenarian Suffolk witch, John Lowes, was said to have sunk a ship by sorcery.⁹⁹ As well as malevolent witches being accused of sorcery, cunning folk could also find themselves charged with this offence. At Great Yarmouth in 1645 it is clear that some of the accused witches were cunning folk, because they had been accused of trying to locate lost property, not of committing acts of *maleficium*. In 1645, Mark Pryme was charged with three counts of witchcraft on the grounds that he had practised 'enchantments, witchcrafts and charms' in order to find the lost hat of John Sparke, a cushion belonging to Ann Cann and some money belonging to John Ringer.¹⁰⁰ This was despite Pryme being successful in finding the lost hat of John Sparke.

However, it was during the 1650s and 1660s that more direct references to sorcery were made in the indictments. This would seem to indicate that popular perceptions of witchcraft were becoming more dominant during this period. In 1650 4 witches were put on trial before Bartholomew Wormell, the mayor of King's Lynn, 4 years after the Hopkins' trial. The wording of the presentments is significantly different to those of 1646. In these the suspected witches are not only accused of consorting with the devil, but also feloniously practising and exercising 'Evil and diabolical Artes'.¹⁰¹ Although the 'diabolical Artes' are unfortunately not alluded to, as merely the presentments survive, it is nevertheless significant that such words crop up at all. The implication is that these witches were involved in sorcery as well as making a compact with the devil. It has also been demonstrated that most of the cases

⁹⁸ NRO, MSS Y/S1/2, ff. 93, 195-200.

⁹⁹ C. E. Ewen, *The Trials of John Lowes*, passim, for a brief biography of John Lowes and an account of his alleged witchcraft.

¹⁰⁰ NRO, MSS Y/S1/2, ff. 93, 196-8.

¹⁰¹ NRO, MSS C 21/2, 1650.

of witchcraft which came before the church courts of Durham were to do with practising or believing in charming and divination.¹⁰²

On other occasions English witches were thought to be able to conjure up storms. This was especially the case at sea, where superstitious sailors were often keen to see sorcery and witchcraft as the reason for any calamity. In November 1667 Captain Silas Taylor, in a letter to Captain Williamson, told of a ship that had been lost in a storm off Ipswich. Another ship had come within hailing distance and had asked if they required assistance. They were told that 'they had long laboured to free their maintop, where sat a couple of witches; but by all that they could do, could not remove nor get them down, and so they were lost people'. Apparently the stricken vessel's master had named the two witches to the master of the other ship, and they were subsequently imprisoned at Ipswich.¹⁰³ Likewise in a letter to the navy commissioners in 1656, Adam Smythson explained he had been unable to sail because the winds had been contrary. This was because an old woman living at Pevensey had ~~professed~~ ^{PROPHESIED} that they would not get out of port for 3 months. Apparently she was 'accounted as very evil tongued, and, by report, has done a great deal of harm both to the people and their cattle'.¹⁰⁴ These examples seem to indicate that English witches were not just accused of petty acts of *maleficium* against individuals, but could also be accused of affecting the forces of nature, conjuring up storms or becalming ships. However, before drawing any firm conclusions about the character of witchcraft during this period a certain element of caution is necessary here. The phraseology employed by some of the clerks recording the presentments may have been standard ones. Alternatively the difference in the wording of the indictments may have been due solely to stylistic changes. Despite this, the fact that such phrases were not used in every indictment would seem to indicate that some witches were indeed accused of

¹⁰² P. Rushton, 'Women, Witchcraft, and Slander in Early Modern England: Cases from the Church Courts of Durham, 1560-1675', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), 116-32, pp. 119-120.

¹⁰³ *CSPD*, vol. 1667-68, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *CSPD*, vol. 1656-7, p. 424.

practising sorcery as well as the more standard charge of consorting with the devil in the guise of a familiar spirit.

The examples of witchcraft taken from the Somerset records and, to a lesser extent from Ely and Norfolk, are at variance with the findings of others who have asserted there is little evidence those tried as witches actually practised sorcery.¹⁰⁵ The problem is perhaps compounded by a too rigid definition of the term 'sorcery' as simply malignant magic.¹⁰⁶ During the seventeenth century sorcery included any form of incantation, spell or attempt to achieve some supernatural effect, whether for good or evil. In addition the assertion that accusations of sorcery did not feature in English trials is often merely based on the mistaken assumption that sorcery is not mentioned in any trial records, but as has been seen this appears not to have been the case.

Even if it is true that the actual sorcery of the alleged witch was believed to have been unimportant when compared with the 'witch's malice', this was not the popular conception. This attitude manifested itself not in witchcraft presentments at the quarter sessions or the assizes, but in the depositions of witnesses and in pamphlets. When Ann Styles told Edmund Bower about the sorcery she had witnessed the Wiltshire witch Anne Bodenham committing in 1653, it was quite clearly designed to pander to the popular perception of witchcraft. During her visits to Anne Bodenham, she described how the witch demonstrated a scrying device, 'a round green glass', through which, with the aid of a book containing pictures of the devil, she was able to see into other people's homes. She also witnessed various incantations, including the drawing of a circle with a staff and placing a book, with a green glass on top of it, within the circle. A pan of hot coals was placed within the circle and some powder was then thrown on the coals. Soon after the witch called for 'Belzebub, Tormentor,

¹⁰⁵ Richard Horsley, for example, has argued that English witches did not practice sorcery on their victims, but were simply accused of malevolence and consorting with familiar spirits. R. Horsley, 'Who were the Witches? The social roles of the accused in European witch trials', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 9:4 (Spring, 1979), 689-715, p. 702.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 700.

Satan and Lucifer', and during a great gust of wind there appeared 5 boys, a snake and a dog who all danced within.¹⁰⁷

Figure 13: Anne Bodenham Conjuring up her Imps



Source: N. Crouch, *Kingdom of Darkness* (London, 1688).

The belief that witches employed wax pictures representing their victims seems also to have been a fairly widespread one in early modern England. This further indicates that English witches were thought to be involved in sorcery, as well as simply cursing or bewitching their enemies. No doubt the belief that witches used sorcery to bewitch their enemies was uppermost in the mind of the victim when the allegation of witchcraft was made. It did not matter if the alleged witch was actually performing any sorcery or not. Once a person was convinced he was a victim of sorcery then this was what the witch would be forced to confess. However, in England we know torture was not used, so did witches really stick pins in wax dolls or was this a figment of the imagination of the accuser? The Somerset cases, if genuinely recorded from the trial depositions, would certainly indicate that witches had confessed to using these types of sorcery.

¹⁰⁷ BL, TT E 705 (24), E. Bower, *Doctor Lamb revived*, p. 16.

Figure 14: The Witch Julian Cox



The Somerset witch Julian Cox. Note the wax image in her hand.
Source: J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1683).

In addition there are instances of this type of sorcery occurring in much later trials. In 1682 3 witches were tried before Thomas Gist, the Mayor of Bideford in Devon. A similar *modus operandi* can be found between these witches and those from Somerset. Although this example is outside the period of study and the number of witches accused was relatively small, the case is still worthy of analysis because of the high number of witnesses and victims who gave evidence against them. It also illustrates the dramatic change in the evidence that was cited in witchcraft trials as compared with the 1640s.

Table 17: Sex of Witches and Victims (Bideford)

Sex	Witches	Victims	Witnesses
Male	0	1	7
Female	3	7	5
Not known	0	0	0
Total	3	8	12

Source: PRO, MSS Assi. 23/1 Gaol delivery records', 23/2 Assize records (1678-85).

As can be see from Table 17 the gender patterns in this trial seem to conform much more with the findings of other historians. The assize records for the Western

Circuit show that the actual indictments made against the witches were for offences of bewitching other people to death or bewitching them so that their bodies were 'consumed'.¹⁰⁸ There are no charges of sorcery or damaging livestock or property. The relative absence of male victims and witnesses could be explicable by this absence of property offences, which in turn would appear to tie in with the findings of other historians.¹⁰⁹

Despite there being no specific indictments against the accused witches for offences involving sorcery, the informations of the witnesses belie the fact that the working of incantations and spells was not a necessary requirement in the prosecution of a witch. The first information was that of Dorcas Coleman, the wife of John Coleman, a mariner. She was taken with 'tormenting pains' and 'pricking in her arms'. She had gone to a Dr Beare (almost certainly a Cunning Man) for help, and he had diagnosed she had been bewitched. Similarly Grace Thomas said she had also been suffering from pricking pains. When she was examined she was found to have 9 pin pricks in her knee. This was put to one of the suspected witches, Tempérance Lloyd, and it was asked of her if she had a wax picture with which she was bewitching her enemies. She replied that she had none, but 'only a piece of leather which she had pricked nine times'.¹¹⁰

Like the Somerset witches, the Devonshire witches had harmed their victims not through curses or simple malevolence, but appear to have acted out specific sorceries and spells often designed to harm through the laws of sympathy. This was achieved by sticking pins in a doll, or in this case a piece of leather, in the belief that the person whom they wished to harm would feel a pricking pain. In addition, in these cases the witches could also cause harm through physically touching their victim. Thus Tempérance Lloyd confessed that together with Mary Trembles she had gone to the

¹⁰⁸ PRO, MSS Assi. 23/2, 1678-85.

¹⁰⁹ C. Holmes, in 'Women: Witnesses and Witches,' *Past and Present*, 140 (1993, Aug), pp. 48-9, argues that the rise in female witnesses reflects a decline in offences against property.

¹¹⁰ T. B. Howell, *State Trials*, vol. viii, pp. 1018-1036.

house of Grace Thomas and pinched her shoulders and arms with her nails. This had resulted in Thomas feeling pricking pains in her arms and shoulders. On another occasion Lloyd had gone into the chamber of Grace Thomas and left a 'puppet or picture' on her bed, although she denied having pricked it with pins.¹¹¹

Although the individual samples of witchcraft depositions analysed between 1640-70 may have been relatively small, the range of sources examined do at least appear to suggest that there were two distinctly different types of evidence thought to be necessary in order to secure the conviction of a suspected witch. On the one hand the prosecution seems to have been more concerned with establishing that a suspected witch had made a contract with the devil by proving that he or she had been given a familiar spirit in order to work malevolent magic. On the other hand we find that the depositions of the witnesses are not so much concerned with contracts with the devil, but instead express the fear that witches were engaged in acts of sorcery or of committing acts of *maleficium* on livestock or people. At the Ely trial, and those others instigated by Hopkins between 1645-6, it appears that popular beliefs may have been subordinated by his knowledge of the legal procedure necessary to ensure a conviction of a witch. He was after all a trained lawyer. Hopkins was not concerned to show that witches were sticking pins in wax dolls and worshipping the devil at sabbaths. Instead he concentrated on ensuring that the evidence necessary to convict a witch was forthcoming - that is proving a compact with the devil through the worshipping of a familiar spirit. Beyond the Civil War it is possible to detect in witchcraft depositions and examinations a return to the popular perceptions of what witchcraft was all about - sabbaths, sticking pins in wax dolls and flying on broomsticks.

Despite the difference in the general character of the Ely material, it appears that some of the suspected witches at Ely may have genuinely believed that they had the power to harm. 5 of the suspected witches at Ely confessed to witchcraft voluntarily,

¹¹¹ T. B. Howell, *State Trials*, vol. viii, pp. 1027, 1031.

and all 5 shared certain psychological similarities which suggest they may have believed themselves to be witches. Thus it is necessary to examine closely the character of the accused witches and their relationship with their accusers in order to find some explanation for this. Moreover, in the Bideford cases, as well as those in Somerset, it appears that some of the accused witches admitted they had used black magic in order to harm their enemies. This suggests a deep-rooted belief in sympathetic magic at the popular level which appears to have been impossible to eradicate. Such a hypothesis rests on the essential question that has to be posed: if the suspected witches were confessing to such acts, were they telling the truth? It is certainly a possibility, given these beliefs, that many accused of witchcraft had genuinely taken part in such rituals in the mistaken belief that they would work. Thus the character of witchcraft belief seems to have undergone subtle changes between 1640-70. The final chapter attempts an analysis of these changes and offers some explanations of the character of witchcraft belief between 1640-70.

CHAPTER 7

Psychological Aspects to Witchcraft and Popular Belief 1640 to 1670

It is clear from the analysis of the depositions from Ely and Somerset that witches and victims were inextricably linked. Witchcraft victims and accused witches were rarely strangers. Indeed they were usually known to each other for many years. In addition the cultural acceptability of the devil and witchcraft meant that for many people an explanation that they had been bewitched was perfectly plausible. While it may be true that such beliefs had always existed, they became far more acceptable as an explanation to misfortune during the chaos of the English Civil War and the Interregnum. As noted in earlier chapters the rise of sectarianism during this period provided an ample breeding ground for witchcraft belief. In addition, the number of witches who confessed to their crimes also indicates that these beliefs operated both ways. Many accused witches may have genuinely believed they had the power to perform harmful magic, just as white witches or cunning folk believed they could help people or cure sickness. Moreover, they may have gone further and deliberately exploited their evil reputation with their neighbours in order to gain what they wanted. In this chapter it is intended to explore these aspects of witch belief. In the process of doing so modern findings in the field of psychology will be utilised. However, it is important to stress that it is not the intention to pathologise witchcraft belief by labelling it, rather there is one aim only: to provide possible explanations to the long-standing tensions prevalent within communities which culminated in witchcraft accusations.

Perhaps the most striking factor about many local witchcraft informations, depositions and examinations is the number of cases where the accused is mentioned as being a known witch for sometimes up to 30 years prior to the actual prosecution. Additionally, in many depositions the alleged witch confessed to being visited by the devil often many years prior to the incident in question. In other cases the accused is mentioned as being the offspring of a known witch, who had either been prosecuted or

was known to have had an evil reputation. Indeed, it was the trawling up of a witch's past that was one of the unique factors of witchcraft prosecutions as compared with other crimes.

As has been demonstrated in Chapter 6, local people were usually recruited to act as searchers and as a result were in a far better position to comment on the previous bad character of a suspected witch. This was because the crime of witchcraft was known as a *crimen exceptum*¹ in law, and thus hearsay evidence, the testimony of young children and the previous character of the accused were all permissible as evidence. However, before drawing the conclusion that this is evidence that the accused witch may have been suspected by neighbours of being a witch well before her trial it is necessary to advocate an element of caution, as such confessions may have been induced by the interrogator in order to implicate the witch in past unexplained deaths or illnesses. Despite this proviso, there are still many examples of witnesses who testified that the suspect had always been accounted a witch, and it is therefore likely such characters had established for themselves evil reputations well before their trial. When Jeremie Briggs of Haddenham gave evidence before the Ely justices, he told them 7 years ago he had lost some of his horses and cattle, and 4 years ago one of his children had gone into fits. He believed this had all been

done by Jone the wife of Robert Briggs this Informants mother in law & the reason why this Informant Conceaveth to be the act of ye said Jone because they have had many Fallens out & the sd Jone hath used many threatning speches against this Informant she having been a woman that hath a long tyme been suspected for a witch.²

When the suspected witch Ellen Caryson was searched for marks in 1647 the searcher Anne Morise was able to testify to the Ely Assizes that Caryson had been accounted a witch for a long time and her mother before her.³

Perhaps of greater significance were witchcraft depositions in which the accused was alleged to have committed acts of *maleficium* many years before the trial took

¹ 'An exceptional crime' and therefore not subject to the standard rules of evidence.

² CUL, MS E/12, f. 10.

³ Ibid., f. 1.

place. Elizabeth Norman of Norfolk deposed in 1647 that 3 years before 6 of her horses and 4 of her cows had died within the space of 3 weeks, and she believed this had been caused by Elizabeth Foot a known witch.⁴ In total, of the 17 accused witches mentioned in the Ely Episcopal records for the year 1647, 12 had committed the act of witchcraft some years before they had come to trial.⁵ Among the 27 witches whose information's are available for the Essex summer sessions held at Chelmsford in 1645, 14 had committed acts of witchcraft some years before they had been accused.⁶ In Huntingdonshire in 1646 there were 7 cases out of 9.⁷ In Kent in 1645 there were 4 cases out of 8.⁸

This apparent toleration of witches before their trial was reflected not only in the testimony of the searchers involved in the cases, but also in the depositions of the witches themselves, many of whom seem to have been perfectly willing to confess to acts of witchcraft many years prior to the investigation. In addition, when a witch was interrogated or accused of witchcraft, it was common for witnesses to come forward and cite earlier examples of *maleficium*. During the interrogation of Ellen Caryson the first accusation made against her stemmed from an incident which occurred 3 years before. In 1643 the village constable for Upwell together with others came to her home in order to press one of her sons into military service. Presumably they broke in early in the morning, for the information states they found 'her in her bedd [and] she threatened them saying they had better ben at home in ther bedds, and within a fortnight after or thereabouts every one had a Cowe dyed'.⁹ This misfortune was blamed on her witchcraft. The second incident arose from a dispute a fortnight before the trial. An Upwell butcher, Robert Parson, said he had contracted to sell a pig to

⁴ CUL, MS E/12, f. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, passim.

⁶ BL, TT E296 (35), *A true and exact relation of the severall informations*.

⁷ BL, TT E 343 (10), *The Witches of Huntingdon*.

⁸ BL, TT E 303 (33), *The Examination, confession, Triall, and Execution, of Joane Williford, Joan Cariden, and Jane Hott: who were executed at Feversham in Kent, for being Witches* (London, 1645).

⁹ CUL, MS E/12, f. 2.

Ellen Caryson, if his wife would consent to it. Ellen came to the house and demanded the pig but Katherine Parson was not willing to part with it. Ellen then 'clapte her hand uppon the table & swears twice or thrice she would make her glad to lett her have the pigg'. Within an hour, Katherine was 'tormented all over her body'; so she let Ellen have the pig. Furthermore Katherine testified that their two children, one 7 years old and the other 23 weeks old, died within a fortnight.¹⁰

Leaving aside the recent allegation made against her, one is faced with the problem of explaining the earlier allegations. There were 5 witnesses to the incident: Richard Denton, the village constable, Stephen Hasele, Jonas Kowe and William Mann. However, only Richard Denton testified to the incident. With so many witnesses, together with the belief that their cows had been bewitched by Caryson, one would have thought they could have effected a prosecution at the time. This was not the case. Rather the incident was used to bolster the case against her and to establish her recidivist nature as a witch. When Robert and Katherine Parson testified against Caryson they both stated that she had been accounted a witch for at least 20 years, and her mother before her.¹¹

The testimony of Ann Sharp against Ann Disbarrow before the Ely assizes during the same year reveals similar long-standing tensions. She described how Francis Caule suffered from fits and when he was asked if Ann Disbarrow was responsible he confirmed it. He had suffered at her hands ever since she had fallen out with his daughter. In this case the witness did not ask who was responsible for the fits, instead he accused Disbarrow because of the long held suspicion that she was a witch. Again it seems likely she had an established reputation for evil. Such an opinion is reinforced when one considers the view of another of her victims, Walter Mayes of Ely. He testified that in June 1645 Ann Disbarrow fell out with his maid servant and threatened her saying 'she would be revenged of her'. Misfortune

¹⁰ CUL, MS E/12, ff. 2, 44.

¹¹ Ibid.

followed: the servant went to King's Lynn in a boat which sank; also a horse and some of his cattle had died. Since

the mother of the said Ann Disbarrow was commonly suspected to be a witch and that these losses & Accidents have fallen out as aforesaid hee this Informant doth verily believe that the said Anne D did occasion these losses and Accidents by the helpe of some familiar spirits or spirits called Impes.¹²

Likewise in May 1646, Thomas Wilson, a labourer, testified he had been driving a dung cart into some fields when he met Ann Disbarrow who warned him 'take heed that thou Receivest no hurt by the Cart'. Soon after the axle broke and the cart wheel ran over one of his legs and lamed him. 'And because this said Anne Disbarrow is reputed to be a witch: hee is verily perswaded that shee occasioned his hurt by the helpe of her familiar spirits'.¹³

On other occasions suspected witches were accused of boasting to neighbours of their exploits. Edward Mason testified to the Ely justices in 1647 how Tomerson Read had told him that the devil had appeared to her in the likeness of a mouse and made a compact with her. In addition, one of her searchers testified that Read had told her that she had made a compact with the devil 16 years previously. During her own examination, Read admitted the devil had appeared to her in the shape of a large mouse 7 years previously. It is also interesting to note how the same event could be related in quite different versions. Robert Miller, the son of John Miller, was visited by John Read, Tomerson's son, who asked him to come to his mother's house. When he got there she gave him a white root to eat. Soon after this he went into his first fit. In Tomerson's confession, she credited her mouse familiar with bewitching Robert. Robert Miller's version indicates not bewitchment, but poisoning. Perhaps John Miller had sent his son to Tomerson Read's house to cure him of some ailment, and the cure had gone wrong. It would then have been understandable for him to accuse her of bewitching his son.¹⁴

¹² CUL, MS E/12, f. 19.

¹³ Ibid., ff. 3 & 'deposition of Thomas Wilson' (unnumbered folio).

¹⁴ Ibid., ff. 11 & 'examination of Tomerson Read' (unnumbered folio).

Another suspected witch from the same trial, Elizabeth Foot, was accused of bewitching 6 horses and 4 cows belonging to Elizabeth Norman, 3 years before the prosecution. This was because the two women had fallen out. When Dorothy Ellis was examined by the justices, she admitted to forming a contract with the devil 30 years previously. In addition she was held responsible for the fits suffered by the two daughters of Gillian Salter 7 years before. Similarly the suspected witch William Watson, confessed to making a contract with the devil 30 years before the trial. The testimony of Henry Freeman, a miller of Ely, also included the assertion that Peter Burbush had for a long time been reputed a witch, and that after threatening him his mill had fallen down in calm weather. In addition he had lost many of his cattle and believed that Burbush was the cause of these calamities.¹⁵

It would appear from these cases that either the witch was well established as a witch before the accuser's interrogation, or, for reasons of his own, the accuser deemed it necessary to ensure the witch confessed to having been a witch for some time prior to the examination. However this latter reason seems unlikely because there was no reason in law for the accuser to establish that the witch was a recidivist, he merely had to provide evidence of a compact with the devil.¹⁶ If the suspected witch was not induced to confess to being a witch for many years before the interrogation then this means he or she must have either confessed this freely or it was because the accuser only had the evidence of an act of witchcraft committed many years previously to go on. Thus he would find it necessary to ensure the witch confessed that to being a witch from at least the time of the alleged act of witchcraft. The majority of the cases involving an external accuser or witch finder seem to follow this pattern. The witch must have had an evil reputation well before the witch finder's investigation. What needs to be explained is why, given that this situation was

¹⁵ CUL, MS E/12, ff. 7, 12, 16 & 'examination of Dorothy Ellis' (unnumbered folio).

¹⁶ Under the terms of the Witchcraft Act of 1604 it was an offence to 'consult, covenant with, entertain, feed, or reward any evil or wicked spirit to or for any intent or purpose'.

ongoing, a suspected witch was not prosecuted earlier, rather than being allowed to become fully established as the village witch?

One explanation could be that many people may have been genuinely fearful of the consequences of an accusation of witchcraft. If, for example, it was believed the accused had supernatural powers might those powers be used in retribution? The justice who investigated the accused witch Ann Tilling at Malmesbury, Wiltshire, in 1685, was certainly aware of this. He pointed out that one of the consequences of acquittal was the possibility of retributive action not only by the accused witch, but also by her associates.¹⁷ Alternatively, if the accusers did not believe this and were cynically accusing a person whom they hated or wanted to revenge themselves against, they may have been worried about legal action being taken against them. Certainly it is true that victims of witchcraft often materialised when a suspected witch was safely in custody and the fear of retribution was diminished. In such cases retrospective allegations would be common. In 1646 Peter Slater of Little Catworth in Huntingdonshire heard that Francis More was in custody as a suspected witch. He went to ask her if she had anything to do with the death of his wife who had died in child birth 21 years before. More replied that she had cursed her.¹⁸ Such evidence is fairly typical and points to long held suspicions not made open for fear of retribution or of other consequences of an unsuccessful prosecution. The legal authorities might not take an allegation seriously if nobody had died. It could thus have been forgotten until at some point in the future when the suspected person was safely in custody and had been accused of witchcraft by someone else.

The apparent futility of making an unsubstantiated allegation of witchcraft was demonstrated by the action taken by Mary Childerhouse in 1651 at the sessions held at Castle Norwich in Norfolk. She alleged that one Bridgett Payne and others had plotted the ruin of her estate and of her body by enchantments and witchcraft. They had also tried to poison her and sent 'idle boys and rude people to disturb her in her

¹⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 102 (1832), part 1, May, pp. 405-410; June, pp. 489-492.

¹⁸ BL, TT E 343 (10), *The Witches of Huntingdon*, p. 6.

tradinge'. When she had complained and sought redress she found herself imprisoned by them, her goods rifled and her fortune spoiled. The case had not been dealt with two years later, for in 1653 she again petitioned the court for reparation for the harm done. In 1656 she petitioned the court a third time against those who 'fought and indeavoured to bring the said Mary into destruccion as well by practiseing poyson on her person as by witchcraft fire & bribes to spoyle her estate'. After each petition the court ordered Sir Thomas Hogan and Brampton Gurdon Esq. to 'examine and call the said parties in order to put a stop to this', but it appears nothing could be done.¹⁹ Certainly one is struck by the length of time the case dragged on for and its apparent lack of conclusion. The most likely explanation was that unless the allegation of witchcraft was supported by clear evidence of a demonic compact with the devil it was not likely to succeed.

If the law was unable to deal with such matters then a lynch mob could. Moreover, such lynchings, although they sometimes resulted in death, were often pardoned by the state. In 1644 the House of Lords reprieved and ordered the release from gaol of Robert Linacre and Edward Wards who had both been found guilty of murdering a woman by ducking her for witchcraft.²⁰ As late as 1699 in the parish registers of Coggershall in Essex there is an entry which reads: '[the] widow Comon was counted a witch, was buried'. Archdeacon Bufton's diary provides a cause of death: '1699, July 13. The widow Coman was put into the river to see if she would sink, because she was suspected to be a witch, and she did not sink but swim'. Apparently this was repeated on 19 and 24 July with a similar result.²¹

These were almost certainly exceptions to the rule, for all perpetrators of violence against suspects risked prosecution. Many must have accepted, willingly or not, the presence of a suspected witch in their village, even one thought to have caused some harm. Acceptance was less grudging if the local witch was reputed a

¹⁹ NRO, MSS C/S2/1, 'Norfolk Quarter Sessions Order Book, 1650-1657', ff. 121, 253, 405.

²⁰ *House of Lord's Journals*, vol. vii (1644-5), p.78.

²¹ C. Cox, *The Parish Registers of England*, p. 229.

cunning man or cunning woman. In view of this an analysis of witchcraft during this period should not be seeking to explain why witches were persecuted, but why they were not persecuted. For the fact is that the white witch or cunning man was generally tolerated by many people in seventeenth-century England as a genuine alternative to the more acknowledged forms of healing, despite being condemned by demonological writers as being in league with the devil.²² This presented a cultural contradiction between those who supported seeking help from cunning folk, and those who condemned it. However, even popular support could turn to condemnation if the service for which the cunning man or cunning woman had been consulted either went wrong or did not work. In 1688 Nathan the son of Zacheous Crab of Westgate Devon, fell into fits. Witchcraft was suspected and he was taken to Mr Gibbs, a cunning man, who gave him a charm to hang round his neck. It was to be worn for a while, then removed and burned. But the son's father removed the charm himself and kept it telling everyone it was just superstitious nonsense. The father returned to Mr Gibbs who told him that if the fits returned they would be worse than ever. This occurred from the time the charm had been thrown into a fire by Nathan's master.²³ There are many other examples of white witches or cunning men falling foul of the law. The famous Wiltshire witch, Anne Bodenham, who was hanged in 1653, had originally been consulted in her guise as a cunning woman in order to find a lost silver spoon.²⁴ Mrs Parish, the companion of the autobiographer Goodwin Wharton, had been accused of witchcraft by a mob that had gathered outside the home of a young girl she was treating for the falling sickness.²⁵ The cunning man Christopher Hall found himself being prosecuted for witchcraft at the Norwich sessions in 1654 after selling a charm to the wife of John Smithbourne who had a 'sore on her breast'.²⁶

²² For attacks by contemporary writers on cunning men, see: W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, pp. 174-177; R. Bernard, *A Guide to the Grand jurymen*, pp. 253-4; G. Gifford, *A Dialogue*, sg. C4; J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, pp. 25-6.

²³ R. Baxter, *The Certainty of the world of spirits*, pp. 47-8.

²⁴ BL, TT E 705 (24), E. Bower, *Doctor Lamb revived*.

²⁵ BL, MS 20,0006, f. 40.

²⁶ See above, pp. 130-31.

Given that there was little to differentiate a white witch from an evil witch and that a witch was a witch irrespective of his or her reputation, then this suggests a toleration of witchcraft at the popular level far in excess of what has previously been recognised. Moreover, it must have been a fairly lucrative business. Christopher Hall had been given a shilling merely for providing some advice and a piece of paper with a charm on it. Such transactions must have been conducted all the time. It was a small step for a witch to progress from being paid for a benevolent service - such as casting a spell - to uttering a curse. One can see them in effect as extortionists, exploiting their evil reputation to seek gratuities at every opportunity. To avert the misfortunes they could bring on the local community they may have received gifts and small payments as a form of insurance policy.²⁷

Indeed, there is evidence, admittedly in other countries, that some may have actively pursued witchcraft as a career. Sally Scully has argued that in seventeenth-century Venice witchcraft was often seen as an alternative to marriage for some women. By this means a woman could maintain her independence and earn a reasonable income. Although the type of witch referred to would appear to correspond with the English white witch or cunning woman, in Venice the malevolent old crone also enjoyed a measure of independence, based on fear or respect. In this sense witchcraft should be seen as part of labour studies. Rather than some mysterious realm, it was an occupation motivated essentially by economic ambition.²⁸ Of course this is not to say every witch prosecuted in seventeenth-century England was a cynical, manipulative extortionist, but it is important not to see the witch merely as a victim. Many were aware of the power they had and were willing to exploit it. Thomas Heywood's play, *The Wise Woman of Hogsdon*, represented dramatically the practice of deception. She sat in a secret closet by the entrance of her home. Her

²⁷ This has been stressed by Norman Cohn in European witchcraft cases, in which organised 'protection rackets' of *tempestari* toured the countryside extorting payments from the credulous peasants in order to spare their fields from storms. N. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, pp. 147-160; See also R. Kieckhefer, *European Witch Trials* (London, 1976), pp. 48-56, 61-62, 64-69.

²⁸ S. Scully, 'Marriage as a career?: Witchcraft as an alternative in seventeenth-century Venice', *Journal of Social History*, vol., 28, no. 4 (1995), pp. 858-9.

assistant then answered the door and questioned clients on the purpose of their visit. 'Now they ignorantly telling their errand', says the cunning woman, 'which I sitting in my closet, overheare, presently come forth, and tell them the cause of their coming, with every word that hath past ... in private: which they admiring and thinking it to be miraculous, by their report I become famous'.²⁹

Contemporary demonologists were often willing to concede that witches may have believed in their powers, but only because they had been deceived into this by the devil. In 1669 the non-conformist preacher and surgeon John Wagstaffe argued it was possible some people may have genuinely thought they were witches. 'I do not doubt', he said, 'but some poor, silly, melancholic old wretches, have really believed themselves Witches, and to be guilty of those actions, which not only their foolish neighbours, but worshipful men in the world have charged them with'. He blamed it on 'the strange effects of melancholy, especially if it hath been heightened by poverty, or want of a good diet, by ignorance, solitariness, and old age'.³⁰

The idea that witches were merely confused, depressive melancholics, confessing out of a genuine belief in their powers, ties in with the belief many seventeenth-century writers had that witchcraft was a sin of the imagination, and it was the vile thoughts of the witch that did the real harm. Paracelsus when writing about alchemical preparations to cure disease, believed that the magician's imagination was an essential force in his practice. Thus he had to lead a pure and blameless life in order to do good and to be able to cure by the force of his imagination. It therefore followed that those of a lewd or evil imagination could not cure and might even cause harm. As a result it was necessary to avoid idleness, especially among women who were thought to be more prone to this type of behaviour.³¹

²⁹ T. Heywood, *The Wise-woman of Hogsdon*, sg. B3.

³⁰ J. Wagstaffe, *The question of witchcraft debated*, pp. 65-6.

³¹ R. Steiner, *The Life and Prophecies of Paracelsus* (London, 1973), pp. 90-1.

Although Paracelsus was commenting about magicians and was generally sceptical concerning the power and existence of witches, the belief in the power of the imagination to do evil extended to demonologists too. The French demonologist Henry Boguet (c.1550-1619) believed that witches could withstand torture through the power of their imagination, assisted by the use of drugs, called the 'spell of silence', which they hid in their hair or clothing. To obviate this they should be stripped and shaved. Although Boguet conceded some had condemned this safeguard as superstitious, he defended it. While the so-called 'spell of silence' might not exist the witch thought it did. It was therefore permissible to 'shave the hair of witches and to change their clothes, in order to deprive them of the firm faith which they have in this spell which may be hidden in their hair or clothing'.³²

Moreover, if a malevolent character was combined with an ugly countenance then this was thought to be particularly characteristic of a witch. In the 1659 translation of the book, *Friar Bacon his Discovery of the Miracles of Art, Nature, and Magick*, it was argued if a man's soul was defiled with sin, his body infirm, his complexion evil and he had a desire to hurt his neighbour, he was more likely to bring 'inconveniences' to another. The author believed 'The reason may be, the Nature of Complexion and infirmity yeelds obedience to the thoughts of the Heart, and is more augmented by the intervention of our desires'.³³ Furthermore the words of such a person were more likely to cause harm, for 'they are hatched within, by the thoughts and desires of the mind'.³⁴ Such demonological works reinforced the popular image of the witch and encouraged the fear by many of the stereotypical ugly old crone and of her curses. It was also in this way that ugliness and old age began to be associated with evil. The few woodcut illustrations depicting witches that are available reinforce

³² H. Boguet, *An Examen of Witches*, p. 126.

³³ BL, TT E 1932 (1), *Frier Bacon his Discovery*, p. 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

the popular stereotype of the elderly old hag, even when the pamphlet itself was describing a witch that may not have been old.³⁵

Such mythology has survived to the present and is perpetuated by popular folk tales, such as *Hansel and Gretel*, in which the theme of cannibalism is linked with witchcraft.³⁶ In addition, stereotypical characteristics concerning the appearance of witches have been quoted by criminologists as recently as the turn of the century as features common to female offenders. In 1895 the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso stated, 'the most criminal women were born abnormally ferocious and could be identified by a large number of physical anomalies, including extra body hair, facial growths such as warts and hairy moles, extra dark skin and hair, facial asymmetry, deep-set eyes and fang-like teeth'. This describes the seventeenth-century witch, a hag-like monster.³⁷ In addition the author mentioned the presence of wrinkles as being a common feature of female criminals: 'certain wrinkles, such as the front-vertical, the wrinkles on the cheek-bones, crow's-feet, and labical wrinkles are more frequent and deeply marked in criminal women of mature age'. In this connection the author related such characteristics to 'the proverbial wrinkles of witches', and specifically mentioned the 'vile old woman, the so-called *Vecchia dell' Aceto* of Palermo'. She was convicted of a number of murders by poisoning. Says the author about the bust of this woman: '[it is] so full of virile angularities, and above all so deeply wrinkled, with its Satanic leer, suffices of itself to prove that the woman in question was born to do evil, and that, if one occasion to commit it had failed, she would have found others'.³⁸ It is a sad fact such stereotypical images seem also to prevail in modern times. It was believed to have been responsible for the prosecution of Dale Akiki in November 1993 at San Diego, California. After an eight-month trial

³⁵ BL, TT E 69 (9), *A most certaine, strange, and true Discovery of a Witch*, contains a woodcut of an old woman with a hunchback leaning on a stick (see above, p. 177). BL, TT E 835 (10) *The Quakers terrible vision* (London, 1655), illustrates an old hag feeding her imps.

³⁶ B. Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (London, 1976), pp. 144, 146.

³⁷ C. Lombroso, *The Female Offender* (London, 1895), p. 86.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Figure 15: The Old Woman of Palermo



Source: C. Lombroso, *The Female Offender* (London, 1895), p. 86.

longest in San Diego's history) he was acquitted by a jury of various acts of indecency and ritual abuse on a number of children aged between 3 and 4 years. It was believed he had been accused simply because of his ugly appearance. His head was said to

have been larger than normal with prominent eyeballs and droopy lids and a concave chest.³⁹

If the seventeenth-century witch was merely an old hag whose power lay in the imagination of the victim, where did this leave the devil who was the perceived source of the witch's power to do evil? Was his power only in the imagination too? As was demonstrated in Chapter 2 it was the view of many, including noted witch hunters like Mathew Hopkins, that neither witches nor the devil had any power to harm at all.⁴⁰ Instead Hopkins claimed that the devil's real power came from his vast knowledge and experience. In query 13 of his *Discovery of Witches*, Hopkins argued: 'the devill doth many times play the deluder and imposter with these witches, in perswading them that they are the cause of such and such murder wrought by him with their consents, when and indeed neither he nor they had any hand in it'.⁴¹ When Hopkins pointed out the devil had existed for over 6,000 years and thus was the most knowledgeable being in the world with the ability to predict when a person was going to die and then deceive a potential witch into thinking that she was responsible, he was basically saying the offence of witchcraft was one of the imagination. The only offence was the actual compact with the devil coupled with the belief of the witch that he or she had caused harm. Likewise Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan* argued that witches had no real power but that they were justly punished for their false beliefs. 'They can', he said, 'do such mischief, joyned with their purpose to do it if they can: their trade being neerer to a new Religion, than to a Craft or a Science'.⁴² In doing so he was reasserting his belief that witches existed despite having no power. He did not feel they were magicians in the true sense of the word, rather they were pursuing the worship of a new cult and their real crime was heresy.

³⁹ *Fortean Times*, no. 76 (August, 1994), pp. 42-3, contains a report of this trial.

⁴⁰ See above, p. 37.

⁴¹ M. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*, p. 8.

⁴² T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 7.

Of course much of the work of Margaret Murray was based on the assumption that witches existed. Mainly analysing the evidence from the 1660 witch trials in Somerset, she argued that there really were witches because they often freely admitted to witchcraft without torture and this was also why many of the educated élite believed in their existence.⁴³ Essentially she believed that witchcraft in early modern England was not a phenomenon of Christian heresy but was the remnant of an organised, pagan fertility religion, dating back to Palaeolithic times.⁴⁴ She elaborated upon many of Frazer's theories about ancient British witchcraft, such as the importance of rituals for increasing fertility in primitive religions,⁴⁵ in order to argue that witches organised themselves in covens of 13 to worship Diana, the Goddess of fertility. The difficulty here is there is some truth behind this. People did take part in ritualistic festivals which had their origin in pagan belief, but by the seventeenth century most of this had developed into superstition or folk-lore.

Unfortunately, many historians have blindly followed their predecessors in condemning Murray's findings without pursuing her original hypothesis. The problem with her argument is not in her claims that witches existed, for they plainly did (in the sense that people believed they could be witches), but rather in her explaining them as belonging to a highly organised pagan cult. Thus while her conclusions have been shown to be flawed, her original hypothesis should not be dismissed out of hand. If people believed during the seventeenth century that witches existed, formed themselves into covens and worshipped the devil, or pagan fertility gods, then surely that is what is important. It does not matter if such beliefs were not borne out in practice. Of greater importance is that such beliefs provided the correct psychological conditions which enabled people to make allegations of witchcraft or to believe they were witches themselves. The belief in witchcraft and the devil in

⁴³ A. Macfarlane, 'Murray's Theory: Exposition and Comment', in M. Marwick, ed., *Witchcraft and Sorcery* (London, 1970), pp. 16-18.

⁴⁴ M. Murray, *The Witch-cult in Western Europe* (London, 1921), pp. 19-28.

⁴⁵ J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (London, 1922), abridged version, pp. 8, 14.

tandem with the belief in God and his angels, provided a mental framework for many people's lives. Those who believed themselves ostracised by their community or suffering from low self esteem with fantasies of revenge for their enemies festering within their minds, may well have resorted to witchcraft as a means of exerting power over others. Given such circumstances it is likely they may have believed that they were witches. Such motives of revenge have been found by anthropologists amongst many tribal people around the world. In a study of the Pueblo Indians, conducted in 1927, it was found that bewitching was 'very commonly the result of a grievance, since a witch who feels injured will retaliate'.⁴⁶ Of course such findings may help to explain why people wanted to bewitch others, but they fail to offer any insight into the source of their persecution, or into their desire to bewitch.

The answer to this problem may be found in modern psychological studies. The behaviour patterns observed in seventeenth-century examples of witchcraft activity, conform very closely with the condition known as paraphrenia.⁴⁷ According to the authors of a study into the condition, paraphrenia deserves a separate status from schizophrenia by virtue of a different sex distribution and the difference in its course and outcome. Late paraphrenia, in contrast to schizophrenia, is more common in females. In addition the authors found that 'there is an over-representation of unmarried and divorced persons among late paraphrenics'. The condition begins after a period of between 6 and 18 months of increasing suspiciousness, irritability and hostile attitudes to others. The patient often complains of being under hostile scrutiny by neighbours, and it is common for the patient to experience imagined sexual assault, often by occult means, by ordinary acquaintances.⁴⁸ Such conditions are manifested

⁴⁶ E. C. Parsons, 'Witchcraft among the Pueblos: Indian or Spanish?', *Man*, vol. 27 (1927), pp. 106-12, 125-8.

⁴⁷ The condition was first conceptualised by Dr Martin Roth in 1955 as a description of a proportion of elderly patients with delusions or hallucinatory symptoms: M. Roth, 'The natural history of mental disorders in old age', *Journal of Mental Science*, 101, pp. 281-301.

⁴⁸ M. Roth & A. F. Cooper, 'A review of late paraphrenia and what is known of its aetiological basis', in eds. C. Katona & R. Levy, *Delusions and Hallucinations in Old Age* (London, 1992), pp. 27, 29.

by a growing feeling of paranoia, and that the community in which the patient lives is becoming hostile. Often this is coupled with intense feelings of revenge towards those whom victims of this condition perceive as hostile towards them. These findings are useful, for if we accept those accused of witchcraft had genuine feelings of persecution and paranoia, then casting an evil spell on their enemies could well have been one method by which they could gain their revenge over those whom they believed were persecuting them.

Despite these apparent parallels it is important to temper with a certain degree of caution the application of modern medical diagnoses of mental disorders to episodes in history. When using such an inter-disciplinary approach it is essential not to fall into the trap of assuming mental disorder in a person merely because he or she appeared to have been suffering from delusions. This was stressed as early as the nineteenth century by the American psychiatrist Isaac Ray when referring to the appearance of the devil to Martin Luther.⁴⁹ He argued that in all probability the vision was an hallucination. The difference between this and a delusion lay in the belief of the person viewing it. If a man declared he had heard a voice speaking to him from the ceiling and persisted in this belief, he was certainly insane. But if he recognised this was a casual, temporary derangement of his senses then this could not be insanity.⁵⁰ The mistake many make is in accepting that some people in the seventeenth century may have suffered from hallucinations, but then condemning them as insane because they believed it. This is because in the seventeenth century it was no delusion to believe in the personality of the devil. It had been the doctrine of the church since medieval times. The difference between then and now is that belief in the devil as a real entity has now become speculative, superstitious even. Today if an hallucination of the devil was seen its reality might well be questioned, whereas if such an hallucination was experienced in early modern times it would have been

⁴⁹ Apparently Martin Luther believed that he was sometimes visited by the devil. On one occasion he hurled his ink horn at him and drove him out of the room. He also complained that the devil lay by his side at night, keeping him awake by disputing on religious subjects.

⁵⁰ I. Ray, *Contributions to Mental Pathology* (New York, 1873), facsimile reprint (1973), pp. 145-6.

accepted as reality because it was acknowledged that witches and the devil existed. By contrast an hallucination of an alien 'Grey' or an UFO, might well be accepted or believed today without the assumption that a person was insane. In other words insanity is to a large extent determined by the belief of the age in which the person lives. Of course it is unwise and in any case impossible, to attempt any diagnosis of people living in the past, and this is certainly not the intention here. It is simply significant to note that the conditions which seem to have been prevalent during the period of study have since been recognised by modern physicians as common to our own time, albeit manifested in a different way.

For many people the confession to an act of witchcraft may well have been a form of attention seeking, or even, in the case of severe depression, a form of judicial suicide. A seventeenth-century example of such a case was the confession made by John Perry in 1676 to murder, a crime for which he was later proved innocent.⁵¹ John Perry was the servant of the alleged murder victim, William Harrison. It was surmised, because of the discovery of a hacked, blood-stained hat and because Harrison had gone missing soon after he had said he was to meet Perry on the road with the servant's wages, that Perry was guilty of his murder. Perry was apprehended and claimed he had become lost and could not find his master on the road. Despite this being verified by other witnesses he was kept in custody. Finally, he demanded to be taken before a justice to whom he would confess. He then said that since he had been Harrison's servant, his mother and brother had urged him to rob his master. He confessed he had told his brother of his master's errand on the road and accordingly Harrison was robbed, after which his brother strangled him. The body was thrown down a sink hole and then his brother placed the hat on the road. They were all convicted and put to death. Perry's mother, Joan, was also thought to be a witch and was hanged. Some years later Harrison returned alive and well after many adventures

⁵¹ *Truth brought to Light* (London, 1676), in ed. H. E. Rollins, *The Pack of Autolyous* (Cambridge, 1927), pp. 96-97; *Harleian misc.*, vol. iii (1809), 'A true and perfect Account of ... Joan Perry, and her two Sons 1676', f. 547.

in Turkey. Much of this case was analysed by the nineteenth-century barrister John Paget who was seeking to explain why such a gross miscarriage of justice could have occurred and why an obviously innocent party confessed to the crime.⁵² It would be all too easy to say Perry was just an evil man filled with malice, his motivation being one of revenge or hatred for his mother and brother; however, it must also be considered he genuinely believed his mother, brother and himself had committed a murder and that his mother was a witch. Possibly Perry had actually considered doing what he later confessed to doing, but sought to ease his troubled conscience by implicating his mother and brother. Certainly these types of fantasy delusions are not unknown today. Police may withhold specific details of murders or other serious crimes to avoid hoax confessions. During the hunt for the kidnapped baby Abbie Humphries in July 1994 there was an estimated 60 hours of police time wasted investigating hoaxes. Two men were subsequently charged and imprisoned for falsely claiming that they had kidnapped the baby.⁵³ In a study by the Institute of Psychiatry in London of 350 would-be murderers it has been established such cases fall into three groups. There are those who are mentally ill. A second group feel an urgent need to confess to something, even a crime they have not committed. But the biggest group consists of those who seek notoriety. According to the author: 'these people usually have a low self-esteem and love being involved in the whole police procedure. Suddenly they are plucked from obscurity and, possibly for the first time in their lives, they are taken seriously; everyone wants to ask them questions'.⁵⁴ In such cases one could say that the line between the serial-killer and the fantasist is a very thin one, for they would both appear to be motivated by the same thing - desire for fame and publicity. Often this is coupled with a wish to get caught, for it is only then that they will achieve notoriety.

⁵² J. Paget, *Paradoxes and Puzzles* (London, 1874), pp. 337-358.

⁵³ In a *viva voce* communication Inspector David Gilbert, who led the investigation into the Humphries case, said that hoaxers wasted more than 60 hours of valuable police time.

⁵⁴ G. H. Gudjonsson, *The Psychology of Interrogations, Confessions and Testimony* (Chichester, 1992), pp. 226-9.

Just as some people genuinely believed themselves to be witches and may have sought to exploit the fears of others, similarly there is no doubt many people genuinely believed they were the victims of witchcraft and used this to gain attention or sympathy from others. Modern studies into hysteria have shown such behaviour has always manifested itself according to the dominant cultural identity of the time. According to the author of one such study: 'To regress within culturally accepted modes, to live within the limits of acceptability, and to adopt identities in vogue in the culture are properties common to the hysterical ego wherever it is found'.⁵⁵ In other words this capacity differentiates the hysteric from the truly insane, because the manifestation of the hysteria, though abnormal, is generally recognised by the particular culture. If we look at witchcraft beliefs in early modern England it would appear that the cultural norms were sufficiently well known for an hysteric to participate in what was acceptable to most people. The victims of witchcraft were merely participating in one of the myths of their cultures: the recognised power the devil had to possess their bodies. Moreover the victim was not to be held accountable for his behaviour, for he was the unwilling victim of the will of another.⁵⁶ The problem with such an interpretation, however, is in differentiating the witch from the victim and in claiming it was only the victim who could find an acceptance in early modern society, and therefore concluding the witch was not a true hysteric since he or she was acting out a part that was not acceptable. The fact that witches were ostracised, tortured or killed, may well attest to their failure to live out identities appropriate to their culture. However, this fails to take into account the acceptability of the white witch in many communities, who was by all contemporary definitions of the word still a witch who derived his or her power from supernatural means.⁵⁷ In

⁵⁵ A. Krohn, 'Hysteria: The Elusive Neurosis', *Psychological Issues* (1978), vol. xii/Nos.1/2. Monograph, 45/46, pp. 162, 166.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁵⁷ For examples of the belief that white witches were as bad or worse than malevolent witches see: J. Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience touching Witchcrafts* (London, 1646), pp. 30-1; J. Stearne, *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1648), pp. 7-8.

addition witches themselves could often be portrayed as victims. Many claimed they were victims of the devil's manipulation or had been seduced by him into performing acts of witchcraft against their will. Thus, when John Bonnam confessed to the Ely sessions in 1647, he explained that while he was hedging he had been approached by the devil in the shape of a mole. He had refused its request for his soul. Instead he was persuaded to give the devil two drops of blood from his finger, and as a result fell under his influence.⁵⁸ When Temporance Lloyd was examined by the Mayor of Bideford in 1682, she explained that when the devil had visited her in the shape of a 'black man' and tempted her to become his follower, she had at first refused. However, she had later fallen for his promises.⁵⁹ Jane Wallis confessed to the Huntingdon justices in 1646 that the devil came to her in the shape of a man dressed in black clothes. He promised her she would no longer be poor and would give her two familiars if she made a contract with him. She refused to lie with him. However, 4 days later she was visited by two imps anyway, and was tempted into evil.⁶⁰ Such cases demonstrate the attempt by the confessing witches to show they had no choice in the matter. Their testimony that they had refused to make a contract with the devil was no doubt designed to demonstrate they were unwilling partners and were therefore blameless and just as much a victim of the devil as those whom they were later accused of harming.

It is also unsafe to differentiate the witch and the victim merely on the grounds that the witch maliciously sought the death of another while the victim did not as this was not true. They could both share very similar characteristics. The victim of witchcraft was just as much seeking to cause harm or to cause the death of another as the alleged witch; in the sense that in making an accusation of witchcraft it was likely that the accused witch would come to some harm. What differentiated the two was that one had the backing of the law while the other did not. Therefore the line

⁵⁸ CUL, MS E/12, f. 22.

⁵⁹ T. B. Howell, *State Trials*, vol. viii (1816), p. 1023.

⁶⁰ BL, TT E 343 (10), *The Witches of Huntingdon*, pp. 12-11.

Table 18: Sex and Age of Witchcraft Victims (Home Circuit, 1645)

	NUMBER
Adult	7
Female child	8
Male child	8
Infant	4
Not known	3
Total	30

Source: E. Ewen, *Witch hunting and witch trials* (London, 1929), case numbers: 599-648.

between the victim and the witch was often a very thin one. Indeed this was exactly what some argued the devil desired the most - to see innocent people prosecuted for witchcraft.

Additionally, accusations of witchcraft did not always originate from the victim, but sometimes could be instigated by the family, usually the parents, of the victim. This was especially the case when the victim was a child or infant. The problem is that most indictments fail to give the age of the victim. However, as has been seen in the examination of local assize records in East Anglia and the south west of England, it was the normal procedure to give the victim's name, occupation and place of habitation. In such cases, where the occupation of the witness is given, it can be assumed that the person was an adult. Where the victim was simply named and instead of any occupation shown he or she was described as 'the son of' or 'the daughter of', it is reasonable to assume that a child is being dealt with. The Home Circuit indictments for the year 1645, the Hopkins witch hunt, can be usefully tabulated to illustrate this point (see Table 21). They demonstrate that two-thirds were either children or infants. In such cases the motivations of the parents of the victim become equally, if not more, important than that of the victim.

The research conducted during the 1970s at St James' hospital Leeds, of over 300 cases where parents who by falsification caused their children to be admitted to hospital for possible operations, the syndrome known as 'Munchausen Syndrome by

Proxy', seems to be particularly relevant. In *The Lancet*, August 1977, two particular cases were analysed: the first in which the parents tampered with the urine samples of their child which resulted in numerous investigations (anaesthetic, surgical, radiological); the second, in which a child was given toxic doses of salt which again led to massive investigation and ended in death.⁶¹ The two cases shared many similarities. Both mothers skilfully altered specimens and evaded close and experienced supervision and the mothers got to know the medical staff well and were always co-operative and helpful. It was also noted that while many mothers who choose to stay in hospital with their ill children often appear uneasy, overtly bored and aggressive, these two thrived on the attention they received. Both mothers had previous records or diagnosis of hysterical behaviour. Furthermore a 1976 investigation into non-accidental poisonings of children by their parents reveal similar findings.⁶² The authors also noted that the children often colluded in the parents' deception and in the administration of the drug.

One cannot help but be struck by the similarity in behaviour between the parents in these cases with the circumstances surrounding many cases of possession in the seventeenth century. We have already seen how hysteria is manifested according to the dominant cultural norm, and so it may be argued that Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy manifested itself in the seventeenth century in cases of witchcraft and possession by the devil. The mother of the child may have claimed the child was bewitched in order to find herself at the centre of attention of her community. Could they have been responsible for harming or injuring their children in order to put the blame on a supernatural cause? Of course it is clearly impossible to answer this question, but it certainly must stand as a possible hypothesis. Certainly there is plenty of modern evidence available to show that parents or carers might be willing to place

⁶¹ R. Meadow, 'Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy. The Hinterland of Child Abuse', *The Lancet*, Aug. 13 (1977), pp. 343-345. R. Asher, 'Munchausen's Syndrome', *The Lancet*, Feb. 10 (1951), pp. 339-341, analyses the faking of illness for attention.

⁶² D. Rogers, et al., 'Non-accidental poisoning: an extended syndrome of child abuse', *British Medical Journal*, vol. i (1976), pp. 793-796.

their children's lives at risk in order to achieve notoriety. The 23 year-old nurse, Beverly Allit, who was arrested and charged with murdering 3 babies and a 10 year-old boy, and attempting to murder another 9 infants at Grantham and Kesteven hospital in Lincolnshire is one of the more notorious examples. A more recent case was the repeated arson attempts in Leeds by the parents of 6 month-old Billy Cunningham and his 20 month-old brother Jim.⁶³ It is harder to find definite evidence for such cases in the past, but there are some cases that would seem to follow this pattern. Perhaps one of the most famous during the last century was the 1869 case of Sarah Jacob. It had been claimed by her parents that she had fasted for over two years, and they had received numerous gifts and money from pilgrims who had come to visit her. However, when it was decided to test the parents claims by having the child watched day and night by trained nurses, the condition of the girl began to deteriorate. Despite numerous pleadings from the nurses, supported by the advice of doctors, the parents refused to give up the charade and let their daughter eat. Instead they continued to claim that the child would miraculously survive without sustenance. The child died within two weeks of being watched. Both parents were put on trial and found guilty of the manslaughter of their daughter by negligence.⁶⁴ Such a case illustrates how far some parents are willing to risk the lives of their children in order to achieve notoriety. This is a classic case of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, and if it had occurred in the mid-seventeenth century may well have been deemed a case of demonic possession or witchcraft.⁶⁵

⁶³ The parents were arrested after claiming there had been an arson attack on their home in Leeds in which both their sons, Jim (20 months) and Billy (6 months) were critically injured. This was after they had made an emotional appeal on television to catch the arsonists. The parents had claimed they had received threats over the telephone and through the post. *The Times*, Oct. 3, 4a, 14, 5h; Oct. 12, 5e.

⁶⁴ W. Hammond, *Fasting Girls; their physiology and pathology* (New York, 1879), pp. 13-27.

⁶⁵ For some seventeenth-century examples of miraculous fasting see: Dr J. Worthington's *Diary*, ed. J. Crossley, 1, f. 340, June 24 1661, in which is described how a Kendal woman took no food for fourteen days; in 1668 Martha Taylor, of Derbyshire, professed to have fasted 53 weeks, as is told in pamphlets written by Thomas Robins (1668), John Reynolds (1669) both repr. in *Harleian Miscellany*, vol. iv (1809), pp. 43-58.

An example of a seventeenth-century case of falsifying bewitchment in order to gain attention can be found in the circumstances surrounding the widow Ann Tilling, of Malmesbury, Wiltshire, in 1685. Tilling had apparently confessed to a Mrs Webb after Mrs Webb had reproached her for bewitching her son. In her confession she also implicated two other suspected witches, Peacock and Witchell. Tilling confessed before the Alderman and three other justices that herself, persuaded by the other two, and with the help of their spirits, had harmed the boy. She also confessed that there were two other groups of three witches in the village. She named them and they were all arrested. However, the case was investigated by a fourth justice who came from outside Malmesbury, and who was less credulous in matters of witchcraft. He pointed out that there was no clear evidence on any of the alleged witches, except Ann Tilling, and that the evidence of the boy was untrustworthy. 'The boyes information', he argued, 'I think should have little stresse put on it, for eyther he is an imposter, or indeed he is agitated by some foreigne or external power'.⁶⁶ The justice argued that if the boy was possessed by the devil or an evil spirit, then any evidence or allegation of his was, by definition, unreliable. Alternatively, if he was not possessed, then he was faking and his testimony was equally unreliable. Moreover, he could not be possessed by a good spirit because of the blasphemous remarks he had apparently made during his fits. He concluded the boy's evidence was instigated by his parents. As for the evidence of Ann Tilling, he felt this could also be challenged:

it may, for ought I yet see, bee a confederacy with the boyes parents, who are sayd to be ever good to her, to bring Peacocke and Witchell, who are women of very bad fame, and terrible to the people. Peacocke having been lately acquitted at Salisbury upon a trial for witchcraft.⁶⁷

That this was a conspiracy concocted by the parents of the boy, most likely the mother, is highly probable, for Mary Webb had previous experience with witchcraft. She was the daughter of Mr Hugh Bartholomew, a brewer and later alderman of Malmesbury, who had been the victim of another witch, the widow Orchard, in 1643.

⁶⁶ 'An account of witchcraft', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 102 (1832), part i, May, pp. 405-410; June, pp. 489-492.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 492.

Moreover, we also know one of the accused witches, Peacocke, had previously been tried for witchcraft. The obvious question to ask ourselves is why Mary Webb did not play the part of the victim of witchcraft herself rather than using her child, as she had already experienced the symptoms of witchcraft in her family and would no doubt have been able to recreate them convincingly. Instead, it is her son who displays the symptoms. Given these circumstances, and the fact that there appears to be no motivation for the accusation, it is possible that the accusation had a psychological background and may well have been a seventeenth-century manifestation of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy. However, any such conclusion must remain tentative. It is possible that any psychological disturbance present may have missed a generation and manifested itself in the second generation, thus exonerating the mother from any blame in the matter. However, given the obvious impossibility of a person vomiting up coal, nails or needles, all of which were alleged to have occurred in this case, it is a fair assumption that a third party may have been present to assist in falsifying these claims.⁶⁸

Perhaps of greater significance with child victims of witchcraft was their greater susceptibility to the persuasive methods that may have been employed by those interrogating them. Thus one possible explanation may be that such fantasies had been implanted in the mind of the child by the interrogator. Indeed such possibilities may also have been the case with the interrogation of the suspected witch. According to the author of one study into interrogation techniques, 'there is an eagerness to please and the need of the person to protect his or her self-esteem when in the company of others ... there is avoidance of conflict and confrontation with people, and particularly those perceived as being in a position of some authority'.⁶⁹ It has been established, following a report into the interview techniques conducted after the

⁶⁸ 'An account of witchcraft', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 102 (1832), part i, May, pp. 405-410; June, pp. 408-10, 492. E. Calamy, *A brief representation*, contains an account of the Anabaptist Anne Wells who also confessed to falsifying being possessed by the devil.

⁶⁹ G. Gudjonsson, *The Psychology of Interrogations, Confessions and Testimony* (Chichester, 1992), p. 138.

allegations of satanic ritual abuse in March 1991 at the Orkneys, that there is great pressure for children to conform to the expectation of adults.⁷⁰ According to the author 'Reluctance or unwillingness to participate in the interview may be interpreted as an indication that there are evil forces at work enforcing the child's silence. One "specialist" cited the fact of children not answering questions as evidence that they had been ritually abused'.⁷¹ Such components overlap with the conclusion of Milgram in 1974 concerning his 'obedience to authority' experiments conducted at the Institute of Psychiatry, Harvard University, in 1968.⁷²

It is not just the interviews of victims that are important but also the suspects. Sleep deprivation, which we know was used by Mathew Hopkins between 1645-7,⁷³ was no doubt a major incentive for some to confess to witchcraft. In a study of the Stalinist purges between 1936-9, it was found that in many cases beatings or other physical torture were not required. Instead sleep deprivation, deprivation of social contact, physical discomfort and threats and intimidation resulted in almost everybody confessing. One of the authors of the study, who was a history professor at the time, had prepared for his arrest and was determined not to confess. He broke down after 50 days of interrogation, confessing to armed revolt and acts of terrorism: 'I had found out why those involved in "show" trials so readily admitted every accusation, and the comparison with the medieval witch-trials no longer seemed to me amusing. There are circumstances in which a human being will confess to anything'.⁷⁴

The link between witchcraft and sexual promiscuity was also a common theme in the mid-seventeenth century, mainly propounded through the belief that witches

⁷⁰ J. La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse*, HMSO report (1994), p. 27, (commissioned by Virginia Bottomley MP, the Health Minister at the time).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁷² S. Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (London, 1974), in which it was established people's low resistance to authority was manifested in their ability to administer painful electric shocks as punishment to those who had failed to answer questions correctly.

⁷³ M. Hopkins, *Discovery* pp. 53-5; J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴ F. Beck & W. Gardin, *Russian Purge and the Extraction of Confessions* (London, 1951), pp. 53, 161.

performed acts of sexual intercourse with the devil.⁷⁵ Moreover, because it was felt by many that the act of sexual intercourse reduced Man to the same level as the animal world, the lack of reason amongst animals became linked with increased sexual potency.⁷⁶ As a result there developed a connection between savagery and lack of intelligence with greater sexual potency, and this reasoning could be used to demonstrate men's intellectual superiority over women.⁷⁷ These arguments could then be employed by demonologists to explain how the devil was able to tempt more women than men into following him.⁷⁸ Such misogynous views were not merely a characteristic of early-modern times, but have survived to our own century. In 1923 William Thomas argued that sexual promiscuity was to blame for criminal behaviour.⁷⁹ In 1961, Otto Pollack argued that women's expertise at secrecy, such as hiding menstruation and period pain, faking orgasm, attempting to prevent or succeed at conception or conceal pregnancy, reflected an essentially manipulative and deceitful nature.⁸⁰ This view almost exactly replicates seventeenth-century demonologists who often described why women were more likely to be ensnared by the devil's machinations. Alexander Roberts argued that women were possessed with an 'unsatiable desire for revenge'.⁸¹ Richard Bernard pointed out that women were 'more malicious ... and far more revengefull according to their power, than men, and so herein more fit instruments of the Divell'.⁸²

⁷⁵ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 15; M. More, *Wonderful Newes from the North* (London 1650), p. 24; H. More, *An Antidote against Atheisme*, p. 241; T. B. Howell, *State Trials*, vol. viii (1816), pp. 1023-4.

⁷⁶ T. Browne, *Religio Medicio*, p. 155, who described the sexual act as the 'foolishest act a wise man commits in all his life'.

⁷⁷ B. Easlea, *Witchhunting, Magic and the New Philosophy*, p. 243, pointed out that it was believed by many during the seventeenth century that the greater sexual capacity of women allowed them to lord it over men as a creature of inadequate sexual potency and hence women by definition were thought less capable of reason than men.

⁷⁸ James VI, *Daemonologie*, p. 69; A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, p. 43; R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen*, pp. 92-3; M. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*, p. 15.

⁷⁹ W. Thomas, *The Unadjusted Girl* (New York, 1923), pp. 109, 126.

⁸⁰ O. Pollack, *The Criminality of Women* (London, 1961), pp. 8-12.

⁸¹ A. Roberts, *A Treatise of Witchcraft*, p. 43.

⁸² R. Bernard, *A Guide to Grand Jurymen*, pp. 92-3.

In addition people accused of these crimes could be seen not just as heretics but also as adulterers. During the 1640s, especially during the Hopkins witch-hunt, the sexual imagery in many of the trial depositions implied that the suspected witch was not just foregoing the worship of God for the worship of the devil: she was taking the devil as her lover.⁸³ However, instead of giving birth to a child, she received a familiar, which, like a child, required sustenance from her in order to survive. This inversion of motherhood has been examined by American historians with respect to New England witches, many of whom were believed to have had an envious interest in infants. Many of the alleged witches in New England were either childless, or had lost their children in infancy.⁸⁴ The alleged witch could still be seen as a carer in the sense that she cared and nurtured a familiar which was suckled like a baby. But there lay here a paradox between the demonstration of the nursing process by the alleged witch and the envious hatred of others who had children whom the witch wanted to punish.⁸⁵

Many of the trial depositions in England during the seventeenth century bear out the findings in New England. In the depositions of suspected witches at the trials held at Ely in 1647 some of the suspected witches had themselves lost children to disease or unexplained illness. The examination of Margaret More demonstrates the psychological implications. She had heard the voices of her children who had formerly died calling to her 'mother good sweet mother lett me in'. When she opened the door to let in her children she 'saw nothing but herd a voyce saying good mother give me some Drinke'. Finally she heard the voice of her children by her bed saying 'mother, Give me your soule & I will save the life of y[ou]r 4 Child wh[i]ch is now living w[i]th you'.⁸⁶ It was upon hearing these words that she agreed to give her

⁸³ M. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Witches*, p.15; BL, TT E 618 (10), *Wonderful Newes from the North*, p. 24; T. B. Howell, *State Trials*, vol. viii (1816), p. 1018.

⁸⁴ J. P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan. Witchcraft and culture in early modern New England* (Oxford, 1982), p. 170.

⁸⁵ J. P. Demos, *Entertaining Satan* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 179-80.

⁸⁶ CUL, MS E/12, 'examination of Margaret More' (unnumbered folio).

consent to the making of a pact with the devil. Another accused witch, Dorothy Ellis, although not testifying to having lost her children, did say that the devil had appeared to her 30 years ago when was 'much troubled in her minde'. She had been accused of witchcraft after she had laid her hand on the cheek of a small child being carried in the arms of Alice Wade, and 'mumbled certaine words to hir selfe'. Shortly afterwards, when the child lay in bed, the mother discovered the side of the child's face and the eye that had been touched by Dorothy Ellis was swollen.⁸⁷ Likewise, the suspected witch Tomerson Read confessed to having been approached by the devil in the likeness of a mouse, and 'the first thing that the divell askt of hir was to take away hir Child w[hi]ch this ex[aminen]t refused'. She then sacrificed some of her blood and made a contract with the devil in order to prevent the devil taking away her child. After this she was given a familiar spirit in the shape of a cat which she sent to bewitch 4 sheep belonging to Robert Gray, because he 'would not have hir Boy' working for him.⁸⁸ A similar example may be found in the examinations of witches at Salem, New England, 50 years later. Alice Lake of Dorchester (New England) was reportedly enticed into witchcraft 'by the devil ... appearing to her in the likeness, and acting the part, of a child of hers then lately dead, on whom her heart was much set'.⁸⁹ In other cases we find women accused of witchcraft after their children had been taken away from them. In 1643 at Ely, Elizabeth Caryson had been woken up at dawn to find the village constable and a group of other men demanding her son so he could be pressed into military service. It had then been alleged she had bewitched some cows belonging to the constable and his party.⁹⁰ Likewise in Somerset in 1664, Margaret Agar explained she had bewitched Joseph Talbot, the overseer of the poor for the parish of Brenham, because he had taken her children into service.⁹¹ Such accounts

⁸⁷ CUL, MS E/12, ff. 15 & 'examination of Dorothy Ellis', (unnumbered folio).

⁸⁸ Ibid., 'examination of Tomerson Read', (unnumbered folio).

⁸⁹ 'Letter of Nathaniel Mather to Increase Mather', in ed., E. L. Burr, *Narratives of the witchcraft cases* (repr. New York, 1968), pp. 408-9, n4.

⁹⁰ CUL, MS E/12, f. 2.

⁹¹ J. Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, p. 149.

demonstrate the anxieties felt by mothers, during the Civil War, at parting with their sons. But the depositions also demonstrate the psychological turmoil many women experienced at the loss of their children during childhood.

A possible explanation to confessions of this type, may be that the accused witches were suffering from some type of hallucination. In the cases quoted above, the alleged witches reported hearing voices, or dreamt they had seen their children. Such audio hallucinations following the death of a loved one have been shown by psychiatrists to be common amongst the elderly, and to a lesser extent visual hallucinations too. In a study of the mourning process amongst the Hopi Indian women this has been found especially common.⁹² Of three elderly widows who were analysed in detail, all of whom were suffering from acute depression, it was related to the author how they saw visual hallucinations of their dead husbands (in two of the cases), and their dead children (in one of the cases). The author pointed out such examples were typical of those who admitted to experiencing hallucinations. The visions occurred when all external stimuli were lacking and the person was concentrating on the phenomenon itself. There were no props or gimmicks and the experience was solitary. The person was able to speak to the apparition as if it was real.⁹³ A more comprehensive study was made of such phenomena in 1971 in which 227 widows and 66 widowers were interviewed in order to determine whether they had experienced an hallucination of their dead spouse. Almost half said this was so during the first 10 years of widowhood. It was found the proportion of men and women was similar, although young people were less likely to hallucinate than those widowed after the age of 40.⁹⁴

Another explanation for the visions experienced by accused witches confessing to the justices at Ely was that they may have been dreams. This was certainly a point

⁹² W. F. Mathchett, 'Repeated Hallucinatory Experiences as part of the Mourning Process Among Hopi Indian Women', *Psychiatry*, vol. 35 (May 1972), pp. 185-194.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 185-194.

⁹⁴ W. D. Rees, 'The Hallucinations of Widowhood', *British Medical Journal*, 4 (1971), pp. 37-44.

debated at the time. In 1651 Thomas Hobbes argued there was little known about the senses, especially sight. Objects could be seen which in reality did not exist. If a man violently pressed his eye, for example, there appeared a light or an image of a light. But this did not actually exist, it was just 'a creation of our own internal organs'. Moreover if the image continued, as sometimes occurred after the external cause had been removed, then this was a memory of the image, imagination, or in sleep - a dream.⁹⁵

By 1705 the writer John Beaumont was able to argue that the incubus was simply a figment of the imagination of some deluded melancholic. For him the sighting of such creatures had more to do with psychological reasons than anything else. Either they were hallucinations or the manifestation of some waking dream.⁹⁶ He cited examples from classical literature concerning the disease *Corybantismus*, which was a disease of the imagination. Persons affected with it had their ears filled with a noise of music and singing and were unable to sleep except with their eyes open due to the images they continually witnessed.⁹⁷

Edmund Parish, in his study of hallucinations and illusions in 1897, pointed out that they were often associated with feelings connected to the bodily organs. A dream of having a tooth extracted, for example, may have resulted from an incipient toothache. To these can be added the examples of the incubus and succubus. In a *viva voce* communication from a Dr C. F. Muller, Parish was told that such creatures were the result of unnatural sexual intercourse between man and beast. The expression of this was that the legal punishment for the offence of bestiality on the continent was death by fire, providing the intercourse was proved.⁹⁸ During the seventeenth century we see a combination of the two. The familiar spirits in the guise of rats, mice and cats were no doubt seen by the suspected witch, but their behaviour was like that of

⁹⁵ T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 349.

⁹⁶ J. Beaumont, *A historical, physiological and theological treatise of Spirits*, pp. 217-219.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 191-2.

⁹⁸ E. Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusion. A study of the fallacies of Perception* (London, 1897), pp. 55-6.

the folklore incubus or succubus. Sexual intercourse often took place with the animal, or, if it did not, then the creature suckled from the witch. This was often in itself interpreted as a sexual act, because the witch's teats, from which the familiar sucked, were usually close to the sexual organs. In addition the devil sucked blood from these teats. This conjured up images not only of genital worship but also of cannibalism. Both these acts were viewed by societies going back to ancient times as probably the most evil acts that could be committed. Heretics, throughout the history of the world, have found themselves accused of them. Thus certain Christian rituals, such as the Eucharist, were interpreted by the pagan Romans as cannibalistic, just as medieval Christians were to accuse non-conformists of the same.⁹⁹

According to Edmund Parish, the commonest visual hallucinations were black cats, rats, snakes, spiders, shining stars, fiery spheres and so on. Moreover, in many of these cases they were colour specific. Black and red played a leading part. Often these scenes were of an erotic nature and even after the attack had passed, many patients believed in the objective reality of the hallucinatory scenes.¹⁰⁰ Further evidence of the appearance of animals as hallucinations occurred during alcoholic intoxication. According to the author such hallucinations often appeared as monsters and serpents, with visions of vermin and monkeys frequently being seen by those suffering from *delirium tremens*. Other times black men were reported as being seen.¹⁰¹ This conforms very closely with seventeenth-century perceptions of the devil. Sir Edward Fairfax, in 1621, described how his daughter had developed the 'mother' or hysteria and had lapsed into trances. She described seeing not only a black dog by her bed and a white cat that had tried to smother her, but also the colour red cropped up in her visions. Satan presented her 'with a red horse', and urged her to get on and ride with him. On another occasion Satan appeared in the shape of a red cat. The editor of this account, William Grange, writing in 1882, speculated that it was likely

⁹⁹ N. Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons*, pp. 12-21, for a discussion on the origins of such beliefs.

¹⁰⁰ E. Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusions*, pp. 35.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

the children were suffering from some mental disorder and the father was completely deceived.¹⁰²

In addition modern studies into sleep paralysis and waking dreams have shown that such hallucinations originate in the temporal lobes of the brain (well-known because in temporal-lobe epileptics this is where the focus is of their problem). The experiments conducted by Professor M. Persinger of Laurentian University, Ontario, in which he stimulated the temporal lobes, of volunteers, with magnetic impulses, have demonstrated that it is possible to induce hallucinations, often of an erotic nature.¹⁰³ This was most commonly manifested in accounts of alien abduction or alien rape. Such patterns are similar to the incubi or succubi reports of previous centuries, the only difference between then and now was that those experiencing the visions interpreted them according to the cultural norms of the time.¹⁰⁴

A further explanation might be that witches were simply enacting fantasies of revenge against their enemies. During the seventeenth century the enactment of witches fantasies against enemies often took the form of stabbing or piercing wax dolls which took the place of the person they most hated. Moreover the reality of the act was reinforced by ceremonies, such as baptisms or dances and chanting, which were designed to assist people into believing there was a sympathetic link between the wax doll and the intended victim. Such enactment of revenge-fantasies can be corroborated through the findings of anthropologists. In a study conducted in 1948, it was observed that many cultures used a pointed stick, bone, pin, or dart which was then thrown or pointed in the direction of the man to be killed by sorcery. According to the author of the study, the essential part of the ritual was the sorcerer's intense expression of fury and hatred as he thrust the implement in the air, turning and

¹⁰² W. Grainge, ed., *Daemonologia*, pp. 38-42.

¹⁰³ *Close Encounters*, text adapted from Horizon programme transmitted on 28 November 1994, pp. 24-9.

¹⁰⁴ One explanation offered was that the electrical discharge released when rock is crushed under pressure during earthquakes, may emit sufficient electromagnetic waves to cause temporal lobe hallucinations (*Close Encounters*, pp. 28-9). See also: B. Hopkins, *Missing Time* (London, 1981); J. Mack, *Abductions* (London, 1993).

twisting it as if to bore into the imagined wound, then pulling it back with a sudden jerk. 'Thus, not only is the act of violence, or stabbing, reproduced, but the passion of violence has to be enacted'.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, such imagery also extended to the victim of the sorcery. During the seventeenth century in England one often finds that the pain suffered by the bewitched person is described as a stabbing pain, or a pricking. The testimonies of those bewitched at Bideford are good examples.¹⁰⁶ In addition the belief that witches stuck pins into wax dolls or images was demonstrated by the testimonies of witchcraft victims in Somerset. Other spells used the same imagery, such as the thrusting of a hot iron into butter that would not churn, or thrusting a poker into the faeces of a person one wished to harm. All these images are variations of the general theme of acted out violence intended to actually affect the victim. These actions were not performed because the witch knew that other witches had been found guilty at the assizes of performing such acts. They appear very seldom in trial records. Neither was it likely that the prospective witch had read about any spells with which she could harm her enemies. Most of them were illiterate. Thus, the methodology of their spells derived from superstitious belief in the power of words and actions and of folklore tales passed down from generation to generation. Today, we often see on our television screens mobs of deranged people sometimes burning or destroying effigies or flags representing the nations or people they wish destroyed. These acts are not performed because they have read about them as being useful magic which could be performed against their enemies. They are usually spontaneous actions resulting in acted out violence against an enemy they are helpless against. The difference between early-modern times and now is that if some harm had befallen an enemy in the past, then the malevolent actions performed by the witch immediately preceding it would have been deemed as witchcraft. Now it would merely be thought coincidence. In this sense the most important component to any magical ritual is the psychological one. They are totally powerless without the belief that they might work, both by the

¹⁰⁵ B. Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion and other essays* (Free Press, 1954), pp. 70-84.

¹⁰⁶ See above, pp. 224-6.

victim and by the magician. Most importantly all these reactions engender the image of the desired end and thus assist psychologically in a return to harmony.

There are clearly a large number of varying factors which account for the mechanics of witchcraft accusation and confession. Whether the alleged witches who confessed to their crimes were suffering from hallucinations, dreams, delusions or tortured by sleep deprivation to the point at which it became a relief to confess to a crime which would result in their death, is almost impossible to say. Neither can it be said whether a similar process was in operation with those who alleged witchcraft against others. It is clear that both witches and their victims had much in common. Indeed, if one were to look for witches in this period one would do better to seek them amongst the alleged victims of witchcraft, who all sought to revenge themselves against an enemy. This chapter has not sought to offer a definitive explanation as to why this occurred. Rather it seems that the peculiar circumstances prevalent between 1640-70, allowed various phobias and psychoses to come to the fore, enabling hysterics and psychopaths to target their hatred at their enemies in way that was fully supported by the law.

CONCLUSION

When Charles I left London for York on 11 January 1642, leaving his peers to look after themselves, he not only precipitated a major change in the structure of the state and government, but also threatened a complete breakdown in the existing social structure. As a result, society itself, not just Parliament, became totally fragmented. The disruption to accepted norms within the hierarchy of society was further exacerbated by the chaos that the Civil War brought to the land. People had to endure the hardships of higher taxation, seizure of their property for quartering of troops, and plunder of their crops or livestock. Armies brought fire and sword to many towns and villages, the payment of burning money notwithstanding, and the risk of fire was much increased by the war. The movement of armies also resulted in the spread of disease. People fled to walled towns for protection, but this resulted in overcrowding and with the water supply often interfered with, together with the lack of food available, the death rate through famine and disease climbed.¹ Everywhere it seemed that God had abandoned people to their fate, and as a result sectarianism flourished. The horrors of the Civil War were seen by the leaders of many of these sects as God's punishment for the sins of the people. Some believed the Civil War heralded the coming of the thousand-year rule by Christ and his saints.² Moreover, the removal of censorship meant that such opinions could be circulated freely by any person with access to a printing press. As a result witchcraft and ancillary popular beliefs now came to be recognised as a useful means of espousing political or religious issues.

As well as the effect of the war on the countryside, and on those who had to subsist on it, society became far more localised. Law and order became the province

¹ I. Roy, 'England Turned Germany? The Aftermath of the Civil War in its European Context', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* (1978), pp. 137, 141-2.

² C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972) passim; K. Thomas, *Religion*, p. 168; B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men. A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London, 1972), Chp. 2.

of local military governors, as judges were no longer travelling the circuits.³ Often the squire would be away fighting, leaving local government in the hands of hastily formed county committees. The need for people to decide where their allegiances lay resulted in divisions which cut not just across communities, but also families. In such an atmosphere suspicion and intolerance prevailed. Richard Baxter described the hysteria prevalent at the start of the Civil War in Kidderminster: 'If a stranger moved in many places that has short hair and a civil habit, the rabble presently cried "Down with the Roundheads", and some knocked down openly in the streets'.⁴ Petty suspicions concerning the irregular behaviour of close neighbours within isolated communities now had an outlet, and people would have had little hesitation in approaching their local JP or divine and informing on their neighbours concerning any suspect behaviour. Old scores could now be settled concerning the bad character of unpopular local figures. Such suspicions had lain dormant prior to 1640 because of the difficulty of convincing an increasingly sceptical judiciary about the reality of such charges, but now they were openly aired.⁵ The evidence from the Ely Episcopal Records clearly demonstrates that those prosecuted for witchcraft had often been suspected as witches well before 1640.⁶

However, the suspicions which prevailed in local communities could not have found an outlet without a legal system which translated such tensions into prosecutions of suspected witches. After 1640 there was greater scope for a varied interpretation of the Witchcraft Act of 1604. Often the criteria necessary for convicting a suspected witch was laid down not by lawyers, but by writers of popular pamphlets.⁷ On many occasions the testimonies of witnesses contained evidence

³ F. A. Inderwick, *Interregnum (A. D. 1648 - 1660)* (London, 1891), p. 153; W. Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England from 1558 to 1718* (London, 1911), p. 201.

⁴ R. Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), pp. 40, 51, cited in C. Carlton, *Going to the Wars* (London, 1992), p. 45.

⁵ Concerning the increasing scepticism prior to 1640 see above, pp. 10-13.

⁶ See above, pp. 228-30.

⁷ W. Perkins, *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft*, pp. 201-3; James VI, *Daemonologie*, pp. 80-1; BL, TT E 367 (11), *The Lawes against Witches and conjuration*, pp. 4-5.

which was, strictly speaking, totally irrelevant for the purposes of proving the offence of witchcraft under the terms of the Act. It was common for witnesses to depose that they had seen the witch using wax images.⁸ The witch's mark was also misused in order to secure convictions. Such was the hold on the public imagination concerning the witch's mark, that once it had been found the suspected witch would often admit to the crime.⁹ It seems likely therefore that when Hopkins searched for the mark, he was attempting to induce the suspected witch to confess, rather than to prove a compact with the devil.

Cases of witchcraft prosecution were declining before the outbreak of the English Civil War and continued to do so after 1670. However, to claim that witchcraft prosecution was on an upward trend from 1640 would be a mistake. The peak of prosecutions occurred in the late sixteenth century, not in the 1640s.¹⁰ Keith Thomas has pointed out the rashness of drawing too many conclusions from actual trends in formal prosecution of witches. While this view must be countenanced, the problem still remains of trying to determine why witchcraft prosecutions experienced upsurges, as they undoubtedly did during the English Civil War. Thomas says: 'it may be stated categorically that no convincing correlation can be established between the chronology of witch-persecution and such general events as the incidence of plague, famine, unemployment or price fluctuation', and that 'it is wrong to think of "scares" or "panics" sweeping the country'. Although Thomas does not specifically mention the advent of war or the emergence of sectarianism, it seems implicit in his claim.¹¹ There was a resurgence in witchcraft prosecution during the Civil War, and this can be explained only through the peculiar circumstances that were prevalent during this time.

⁸ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, pp. 53-4; J. Aubrey, *Remains of Gentilisme*, pp. 228-9; T. B. Howell, *State Trials* (1810), vol. viii, pp. 1025-6.

⁹ J. Stearne, *A Confirmation*, p. 42.

¹⁰ A. Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, 1970), pp. 28-30.

¹¹ K. Thomas, *Religion*, pp. 697-8.

While it may be true that witchcraft prosecutions were linked to the intellectual assumptions of the *élite* who controlled the law courts, the process that enabled suspected witches to be brought before the courts in the first place relied heavily on popular accusation.¹² External influences, such as war and lack of religious toleration, may have provided the catalyst necessary for persecutions of unpopular figures to take place. However, the heightened suspicion and distrust of unpopular neighbours prevalent in many communities could only be legitimised when similar suspicions existed amongst the *élite*. The propaganda war that was continually waged between parliament and King during the Civil War routinely employed demonological analogies and metaphors in its language. Therefore, *élite* belief in witchcraft and the devil would have been assumed by many readers, and this would have validated popular superstitious beliefs.

Causal explanations of witchcraft, such as a falling out between neighbours with any subsequent resulting misfortune being laid at the door of the witch, do not support this scenario. An accusation of witchcraft may well have been a response to the muttered malediction or curse of a beggar who had been refused charity, but it is unlikely that it originated from such an incident. The correlation has been made because such circumstances appear in many witchcraft indictments and depositions. But these situations were nothing new and had always occurred. Why else was it that many of the witches who were prosecuted during the 1640s had evil reputations going back sometimes for 30 years? A more likely explanation is that a change was necessary in the structure of society to facilitate the expressing of such grievances as accusations of witchcraft. During the English Civil War, such conditions were in place. Moreover, the growing scepticism within the judiciary, prevalent in the 30 years prior to the Civil War, enabled those who had been suspected by their neighbours of witchcraft to play up to it with a certain degree of security. They may have exploited the fear others had of them by threatening to bewitch any who refused

¹² See above, p. 5.

them gratuities. The witch could also be seen as a useful scapegoat for evil. Major catastrophes such as war, pestilence, and famine were interpreted by many as God's punishment for the sinfulness of mankind, but individual calamities such as unexplained, unnatural deaths of either people or of animals, were often laid at the door of witches. It is here that the main clue lies as to why witches may have been tolerated in rural England. The witch was almost a necessary evil to ensure the compliance of the villagers with their society's unwritten code of behaviour, and he or she must have enjoyed a certain degree of notoriety and, as a result, tolerance. When an external agent, such as a witch finder, came to the village, he did not have to spend time looking for victims. A man or woman well known by reputation would be ousted. A local witch was as notorious as an illegitimate person, an adulterer or a non-attender at church services. It was only then that the last misfortune in the village was used as an example of his or her witchcraft by the accuser. Moreover, for the seventeenth-century hysteric, the local witch provided an easily recognisable and generally accepted source of blame for the acted-out or self-inflicted illness that would place him or her at the centre of attention of the community.

A period of relative social stability followed the Restoration. The whereabouts of sovereignty was no longer in dispute after 1660, and the need for competing ideologies to proselytise or gain political support within the nation, diminished. 1660 witnessed the return of time-honoured institutions, monarchy, aristocracy and episcopacy, the judiciary and the magistracy. The Book of Common Prayer was reinstated along with the traditional Christian festivals.¹³ Censorship of the press was re-established - only the London Gazette was permitted. The renewal of such structures affected all sections of society: the authority of JPs and clergy was re-established in local communities. However, it would be quite wrong to claim that the renewal of the old church heralded a new age of toleration. The provisions of the 'Clarendon Code' of 1662-6 and the Test Act of 1673, imposed severe penalties on

¹³ B. Coward, *Social Change and Continuity in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* (London, 1988), p. 95.

non-Anglicans. The reign of Charles II coincided with the greatest period of religious persecution in English history.¹⁴ After 1662 300 nonconformist clergy were ejected.¹⁵ However, nonconformity, although not officially tolerated, began to be tacitly accepted throughout society from 1670. Many Catholic chapels were built during this period, often indistinguishable from Dissenting Chapels. After the mid-century the ministering of faith-healing and exorcisms by the Catholic clergy was rare. Catholic services were conducted in English without recourse to incense and decorative statues. Indeed this has been seen by Edward Norman as the beginning of the 'age of humanitarian benevolence' and Catholics were not excluded. Many poor Irish, for example, who were now arriving on a large scale, benefited from the new Moorfields chapel in London, its nondescript outward appearance designed not to offend Protestant sensibilities.¹⁶

This did not mean that Catholics and Protestant non-conformists escaped persecution after 1670. However, the degree of religious, political and social chaos that had prevailed between 1640 and 1660 was diminished after 1670. Although dissenters still suffered discrimination, the language used to attack them did not invoke the popular superstitions which had prevailed during the Civil War and beyond. The association of nonconformity with sinfulness and ungodliness through pamphlets which pandered to superstitious beliefs, no longer seemed necessary. The popularity of attempts to use monstrous births and other prodigies as ways of proving God's disapproval of deviance lessened after 1670. The religious crisis which led to the Glorious Revolution in 1688, did not subvert social norms in the way that the reign of Charles I had done. James II was replaced by William and Mary with the minimum of drama, and the existing structures of the State were, if anything,

¹⁴ B. Coward, *Social Change and Continuity in Early Modern England, 1550-1750* (London, 1988), p. 95.

¹⁵ A. Hughes, 'Godly Reformation and its Opponents in Warwickshire 1640-1662, *Dugdale Society Occasional Papers*, no. 35 (1993), pp. 23-4; E. Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 37-8.

¹⁶ E. Norman, *Roman Catholicism in England* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 46, 50.

reinforced. England now had parliamentary representation and a constitutional government, limited religious toleration and a degree of freedom of expression. The liberty allowed by the Toleration Act (1689) and the repeal of the Test Acts made the rhetoric employed between 1640 and 1660 redundant.

Between 1640 and 1660 popular superstitions concerning witchcraft, magic, ghosts and other ancillary beliefs converged with the religious and political ideologies of the élite. Those in legal or political authority employed the language of superstition to make their judgements or decisions more acceptable to the uneducated. In such circumstances ordinary folk often took advantage of the legitimisation of superstitious belief by employing malevolent or benevolent magic for their own profit, or accusing unpopular figures within their community of witchcraft. Witchcraft beliefs had pervaded all levels of society. It was not part of some obscure, abstract belief that had been externalised from early-modern life. It was and had been incorporated in everyday life for generations. The religious and political issues between 1640 and 1670 enabled such beliefs to re-emerge and become pertinent once again.

APPENDIX 1

Alphabetical list of witches by county

During the course of the research into this thesis many references to witches were found. Often these contained little in the way of useful information about seventeenth century popular belief, therefore they are not included in the general text. However, a full list of all witches come across in my research is appended here for those who may be interested in viewing such information. The witches have been listed alphabetically by county.

Many of the witches listed appear in printed secondary sources, especially those from Essex. Where this occurs the relevant book is referred to rather than the original source. It is also important to note that in many of these cases it has been impossible to verify their authenticity. This is especially the case with witches who are mentioned solely in pamphlets or other contemporary works.

Abbreviations

Ewen	C. L. Ewen, <i>Witch hunting and witch trials</i> (London, 1920), Ewen's case numbers are referred to.
Baxter	R. Baxter, <i>The Certainty of the World of Spirits</i> (London, 1691).
Cox	J. C. Cox, <i>The Parish Records of England</i> (London, 1910).
Glan.	Glanvill, <i>Saducismus Triumphatus</i> (London, 1681).
Le Hardy	W. Le Hardy, ed., <i>Calendar to the Sessions Books and Sessions Minute Books ... of the County of Hertford, 1619 to 1657</i> , vol. v (1928).
Rollins	H. E. Rollins, <i>The Pack of Autolyclous</i> (Cambridge, 1927).
Stearne	J. Stearne, <i>A Confirmation</i> (London, 1647).
Townsend	'Diary of Henry Townsend of Elmley Lovett, 1640-1663', ed. for the Worcestershire Historical Society by J. W. Willis Bund (1920).
Acquit.	Acquitted or found not guilty.
Dis.	Discharged.
Hang.	Hanged.
Ignor.	Ignoramus or not a true bill.
Rep.	Reprieved.
BL	British Library. Book or MS reference given.
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic.</i>
ERO	Essex Record Office.
N/A	No information available.
NRO	Norfolk Record Office.
SRO	Somerset Record Office.
Su.RO	Suffolk Record Office.
TT	Thomason Tracts, British Library.

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
CORNWAL				
JEFFREIS Anne	Dis.	1645	Gained power of healing from fairies.	<i>An Account...</i> (1696).
ELY				
BONHAM John	N/A	1647	Bewitched livestock with familiar.	CUL E/12.
BONHAM Bridgitt	N/A	1647	Possession of a familiar.	CUL E/12.
BRIGGS Joan	N/A	1647	Bewitched child to death and livestock.	CUL E/12.
BURBUSH Peter	N/A	1647	Bewitched victim (became lame). Destroyed a mill By witchcraft.	CUL E/12.
CARYSON Ellen	N/A	1647	Bewitched children and livestock to death with familiars.	CUL E/12.
DISBARROW Anne	N/A	1647	Bewitched various victims into having fits.	CUL E/12.
ELLIS Dorothy	N/A	1647	Bewitched a girl to death and various other victims made lame or suffered from fits.	CUL E/12.
ELLIS Robert	N/A	1647	Possession of a familiar.	CUL E/12.
FOOTE Elizabeth	N/A	1647	Bewitched livestock with familiars.	CUL E/12.
GREENE Anne	N/A	1647	Bewitched livestock with familiars.	CUL E/12.
MOORE Margaret	N/A	1647	Bewitched livestock with familiars.	CUL E/12.
PYE Thomas	N/A	1647	Bewitched victim (fits) with familiar.	CUL E/12.
READ Tomason	N/A	1647	Bewitched child to death other victims (fits) and livestock.	CUL E/12.
RIGGE Joane	N/A	1647	Bewitched livestock.	CUL E/12.
SABIE Adam	N/A	1647	Bewitched various victims (became lame) with familiars.	CUL E/12.

WITCH	RESULT	DATE	CIRCUMSTANCES	REF.
SALTER Jane	N/A	1647	Bewitched crops with familiar.	CUL E/12.
WATSON William	N/A	1647	Bewitched livestock with familiars.	CUL E/12.
ESSEX				
AYLETT Robert	N/A	1645	Took part in magical rituals with others.	ERO Q/SR 24/118.
AYLETT Thomas	N/A	1645	See AYLETT Robert.	ERO Q/SR 24/118.
BOONES Joyce	Hang.	1645	Used two spirits to kill.	Ewen no. 640.
BRETTON Helen	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 599.
BRIGHT Sarah	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 626.
CATE Anne	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victims to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 615-6.
CLARKE Eliz.	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 603-4.
CLARKE Ellen	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 625.
COCKE Susan	Hang.	1645	Bewitched livestock with familiars.	Ewen no. 639.
COMON Wid.	Died	1699	Attacked by lynch mob as a suspected witch.	BL 2260.g.19 p.229.
COOPER Anne	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victims to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 634-6.
COPPIN Mary	Rep.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 624.
DIER John	N/A	1645	See AYLETT Robert.	ERO Q/SR/24/118
DISSE Helen	Ignor.	1646	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 650.
DIXON Alice	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 617.
DRAKE John	N/A		See AYLETT Robert.	ERO Q/SR/24/118

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
DRAKE William	N/A	1645	See AYLETT Robert.	ERO Q/SR/24/118
DRAKE (Wife)	N/A	1645	See AYLETT Robert.	ERO Q/SR/24/118
FLETCHER Sarah	N/A	1645	See AYLETT Robert.	ERO Q/SR/24/118
GOODING Elizabeth	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 627-8.
GREENLEIF Mary	N/A	N/A	Bewitched a child with a familiar.	TT E 296 (35).
GREW Margery	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death with familiar.	Ewen nos. 600-1.
HARE Elizabeth	Hang.	N/A	Accused of witchcraft. Had a familiar.	TT E 296 (35).
HARVY Elizabeth	Hang.	1645	Had three familiars.	Ewen no. 645.
HATYN Sarah	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victims to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 642-4.
HITTING William	N/A	N/A	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 296 (35).
HOCKETT Mary	Hang.	1645	Had three familiars.	Ewen no. 646.
HOLLYBREAD Robert	N/A	N/A	Accused of witchcraft. Had a familiar.	TT E 296 (35).
JOHNSON Mary	Rep.	1645	Bewitched victims to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 618-20.
JONAS Rebecca	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death with familiar.	Ewen nos. 605-6.
LANDISH Margaret	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim (consumed).	Ewen no. 641.
LAVENDER Francis	Acquit.	1647	Bewitched victim to death. Also livestock.	Ewen nos. 659,660-1.
LAVENDER Jane	Acquit.	1647	As LAVENDER Francis.	Ewen nos. 657-8.
LEACH Anne	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 602.
LEECH Nicholas	Ign.	1646	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 649.

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
LOCK John	Impr.	N/A	Used witchcraft to find lost property.	Stowe MS 840.
MAYERS Bridgitt	Hang.	1645	Possessed a familiar.	Ewen no. 647.
MOONE Margaret	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victims to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 610-2.
MOTT Edward			See AYLETT Robert.	
RICH Abraham			See AYLETT Robert.	
RICHARDSON James			See AYLETT Robert.	
ROWLE Joan			See AYLETT Robert.	
SMITH Lambert			See AYLETT Robert.	
STERLING Mary	Rep.	1645	Bewitched victim to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 613-4.
THERSTON Anne	Acquit.	1645	Bewitched livestock to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 637-8.
WATERS Dorothy	Rep.	1645	Possessed a familiar.	Ewen no. 629.
WACE Anne	N/A	1642	Accused of witchcraft.	Ewen no. 597.
WAITE Elizabeth			See AYLETT Robert.	
WARREN Ellen			See AYLETT Robert.	
WEBB Mary	Acquit.	1642	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 598.
WEST Anne	Acquit.	1641	Bewitched livestock to death with familiars.	Ewen no. 595.
WEST Anne	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death with familiars.	Ewen nos. 608-9.
WEST Rebecca	N/A	1645	Possession of familiars.	Ewen no. 607.
WEST Susanna	Hang.	1645	Possession of familiars.	Ewen no. 648.
WILES Mary	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen nos. 631-3.
GLOUCESTERSHIRE				
PERY Joan	Hang.	1676	Accused of witchcraft.	Rollins pp.96-3.

WITCH	RESULT	DATE	CIRCUMSTANCES	REF.
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HERTFORDSHIRE

BROWNE Elizabeth	Rep.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 664.
BURBY Margaret	Acquit.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen nos. 662-3.
COTTERELL Margaret	Ignor.	1632	Bewitched victim (consumed).	Ewen no. 665.
MARSH	N/A	1630	Accused of witchcraft.	Le Hardy p.131.
PEACOCK Elizabeth	Acquit.	1641	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen no. 595.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE

CHANDLER Elizabeth	N/A	1646	Accused of witchcraft and possession of a familiar.	TT E.343 (10)
CLARKE John	N/A	1646	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 343 (10)
CLARKE M.	N/A	1646	Brief mention as a suspected witch.	Stearne p.12.
DESBOROUGH Ann	N/A	1646	Accused of witchcraft.	TT 343 (10)
LENDALL	N/A	1646	Brief mention as a suspected witch.	Stearne p.12.
MOORE Francis	N/A	1646	Bewitched victim and livestock to death with familiars.	TT E 343 (10)
WALLIS Jane	N/A	1646	Possessed familiars.	TT E 343 (10)
SHEPHEERD Elizabeth	N/A	1646	Possessed a familiar.	TT E 343 (10)
WEED Elizabeth	N/A	1646	Bewitched victim to death with familiars.	TT E 343 (10)
WINNICK John	N/A	1646	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 343 (10)
WYSACK John	N/A	c.1645	Brief mention as a suspected witch.	Stearne p.11.

KENT

ASHBY Anne	Hang.	1652	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 673 (19)
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<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
BROWNE Hestor	Acquit.	1646	Bewitched victim and livestock to death.	Ewen nos. 651-5.
BROWNE Mary	Hang.	1652	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 673 (19).
CARIDEN Joan	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 303 (33)
DREW Wid.	Hang.	1644	Accused of witchcraft.	N/A
HARRIS Elizabeth	Hang.	1645	Bewitched victims (consumed).	TT E 303 (33)
HOTT Jane	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 303 (33)
MARTYN Anne	Hang.	1652	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 673 (19)
READ Mary	Hang.	1652	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 673 (19)
WILLIFORD Joan	Hang.	1645	Possessed a familiar.	TT E 303 (33)
WILSON Anne	Hang.	1652	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 673 (19)
WRIGHT Mildred	Hang.	1652	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 673 (19)
MIDDLESEX				
CULPEPPER Nich.	Acquit.	1643	Bewitched victim (wasted away).	Midd.Co. Sess. Rolls, 17 Dec.1643.
HAWSON Helen	Acquit.	1648	Accused of witchcraft.	Midd.Co. Sess. 29 April, 1648.
JACKSON Anne	Ignor.	1647	Bewitched victim to death.	Ewen. no.656.
PETERSON Joan	Hang.	1652	Bewitched victim (fits) and poisoned victim to death.	TT E 659 (18).
RADWELL Anne	N/A	1649	Accused of witchcraft.	Ewen Case no.666.
NORFOLK.				
ANON	N/A	1645	Bewitched beer of victim.	TT E 295 (2).
ANON.	N/A	1645	Bewitched a child.	TT E 295 (2).

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
ARCHER Henry	N/A	1651	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO C/S2/1, ff. 121,253,405
BAKER Mary	N/A	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20a/11, f.129.
BAUCOP Kath.	Acquit.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiar.	NRO KL/C21/2
BLACKBORNE Mary	Hang.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiar.	NRO Y/S1/2. f.199.
BLOGGES Jane	Acquit.	1657	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20/12.
BRADWELL Eliz.	Hang.	1646	Bewitched victims (ill) and kept familiar.	NRO Y/S1/2, f.200.
BROWNE Amy	N/A	1651	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO C/S2/1, ff. 121,253,405
BROWNE Lidiath	Acquit.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiar.	NRO KL/C21/2
CARSY Anne	Hang	1659	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20/13.
CLIPWELL Alice	Hang.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiar.	NRO Y/S1/2, f.200.
CURRILL Margaret	N/A	1649	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20/12.
DANT Ammie	Hang	1649	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20/12.
DEMPSTER Thomas	Acquit.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiar.	NRO KL/C21/2.
DUDGEON Elizabeth	Hang.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiar.	NRO Y/S1/2, f.199.
ELLISBOURNE Amy	Acquit.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20a/11, f.129.
FARRETT Nazareth	Acquit.	1646	Consulted with familiar.	NRO Y/S1/2, f.196.

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
GODFREY Emma	Acquit.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	NRO KL/C21/2.
GRIFFON Dorothea	Hang.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	NRO KL/C21/2.
HALL Christopher	N/A	1654	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO C/S3/41a.
HALLOWES Dorothy	Hang.	1650	Bewitched victim to death and kept familiar.	NRO KL/C21/2.
HOWARD Bridget	Hang.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	NRO Y/S1/2, f.199.
JUBBS Anne	N/A	1650	Bewitched a child.	NRO KL/C21/2.
LACEY Joan	Hang.	1646	Consulted with familiars.	NRO Y/S1/2, f.200.
LANE Elizabeth	N/A	1654	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 11/64, f.39.
LEE Dorothy	Hang.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	NRO KL/C21/2.
LIBBIS Edith	N/A	1641	Bewitched victims (languished and consumed).	NRO C/S3, BOX 46.
METCALFE Dorothy	N/A	1651	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO C/S2/1, ff.121,253, 405.
MOULTON Ann	N/A	1650	Bewitched an infant.	NRO KL/C2/12.
MYRS Elizabeth	N/A	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20a/11. f.129.
NIMMIS Elizabeth	N/A	1651	Consulted with a familiar.	NRO Case 11/60.
OLCHER Mary	N/A	1659	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20/12.
PARKER Thomas	Acquit.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping a familiar.	NRO KL/C21/2.
PAYNE Bridget	N/A	1651	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO C/S2/1, ff. 121,253,

WITCH	RESULT	DATE	CIRCUMSTANCES	REF.
PAYNE Elias	N/A	1651	Accused of witchcraft.	405. NRO C/S2/1, ff. 121,253, 405.
PRYME Mark	Acquit.	1646	Bewitched victims (languished and wasted).	N.R.O Y/S1/2, ff.93, 196.
ROOKE Roberta	N/A	1651	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO C/S2/1, ff. 121,253, 405
SCOTT Alice	N/A	1650	Consulted with familiars.	NRO KL/C21/2.
SMITH Sarah	N/A	1884	Lynched for witchcraft.	NRO MS 4413/3, f7.
STYLES Richard	N/A	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20a/11.
TAYLOR Celia	Acquit.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	NRO KL/C21/2.
VERVY Mary	Acquit.	1646	Bewitched victims (ill and sick) and consulted with familiars.	NRO Y/S1/2, ff.197, 198.
WARREN Grace	Acquit.	1646	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	NRO KL/C21/2.
WELLS Margaret	N/A	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20a/11, f.129.
WILKINSON Barbara	Acquit.	1646	Consulted with familiars.	NRO Y/S1/2, f.196.
WORTON Elizabeth	Acquit.	1659	Accused of witchcraft.	NRO Case 20/12.
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE				
CHERRIE, M.	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft	Stearne, p.34.
PARKER Anne	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p. 36.
WYNICK John	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p. 11.

WITCH	RESULT	DATE	CIRCUMSTANCES	REF.
NORTHUMBERLAND				
ANDERSON Elizabeth	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
BONMER Mathew	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
BROWN Isabel	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
BROWN Margaret	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
DOBSON Elizabeth	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
HENDERSON Ellenor	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
HUME Ayllen	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
HUNTER Jane	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
HUTTON John	Died.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	TT, E 618 (10).
KOUPPING Jane	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
MADDESON Margaret	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
MARTIN Jane	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
MOFFIT Margrit	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
PPOOTES Marie	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
ROGERS Ellenor	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
SVVINOV Dorothy	Escaped	1650	Bewitched victims (fits).	TT, E 618 (10).
WATSON Ann	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
WHITE Margaret	N/A.	1650	Bewitched victims (fits) and consulted with familiar.	TT E 618 (10).
WELSH Kattren	Hang.	1650	Accused of witchcraft.	Cox, p.229.
OXFORDSHIRE				
ANON	Shot	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 69 (9).
RUTLAND				
HARVEY Thomas	Acquit.	1658	Accused of witchcraft.	CSPD, 1658-9, p. 169.
SOMERSET				
AGAR Margaret	N/A	1664	Bewitched to death various victims and livestock with familiar. Attended sabbaths.	Glan. p.127.

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
BANBURY Edward	N/A	1653	Used witchcraft to find stolen goods.	SRO, MSS S.R., 86, ii, 72-3.
CARRIER Elizabeth	Acquit. Died.	c.1650	Bewitched victim (fits).	Baxter, p.74.
CASTLE Elizabeth	N/A	1655	Bewitched livestock and beer.	SRO, MSS S.R., 86, ii, 3-7.
CHAPPLE Dorothy	Pard.	1653	Briefly mentioned as being pardoned for witchcraft.	SRO, MSS S.R., 88, 16.
COX Julian	Hang.	1664	Bewitched livestock. Accused of shape-changing.	Glan. pp.193-7.
DUKE Alice	N/A	1664	Bewitched various victims, livestock with familiars. Attended sabbaths.	Glan. pp.137-8.
GREEN Catharine	N/A	1664	Bewitched various victims to death. Attended sabbat.	Glan. pp.162-4.
GREEN Christopher	N/A	1664	See GREEN Cath.	
MEARE Anne	N/A	1649	Brief mention as a suspected witch.	Cockburn, p.30.
RICHWOOD Jane	N/A	1655	Brief mention as a suspected witch.	SRO, MSS S.R.86, ii, 3-7.
STYLE Elizabeth	Died	1664	Bewitched various victims (fits) with familiars. Attended sabbath.	Glan. pp.127-8.
WHITE Roger	N/A	1666	Brief mention as a suspected witch.	SRO, MSS DD/SE 49.
SUFFOLK				
ALDERMAN Anne	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
BACON Mary	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
BEDFORD Meribell	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.26.
BINKES	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.16.

WITCH	RESULT	DATE	CIRCUMSTANCES	REF.
BOREHAM Anne	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.32.
BUSH	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.29.
CARRE Henry	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.25.
CLOWES Mary	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
COLLETT Master	N/A	1732	Bewitched victim to death.	BL, Harl. MSS 6866.
CRICKE Anne	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.30.
CULLENDER Rose	Hang.	1662	Accused of witchcraft.	<i>A tryal...</i> (1682).
DAMERON Katherine	Acquit.	1640	Bewitched victim to death.	SuRO, C8/4/7 f.122.
DEEKES Elizabeth	N/A	c1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.12.
DENHAM Alice	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	SuRO, C8/4/7, f.72.
DENNY Amy	Hang.	1662	Accused of witchcraft.	<i>A tryal...</i> (1682).
EMERSON James	Imp.	1645	Bewitched victim with lice.	SuRO, C8/4/7, f.72.
EMERSON Mary	Imp.	1645	See EMERSON James.	SuRO, C8/4/7. f.72.
EVVERED Mary	Hang.	1645	Bewitched beer at an inn.	TT E 301 (3).
EVVERED Thomas	Hang	1645	See EVVERED Mary.	TT E 301 (3).
FINCH Elizabeth	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.16.
FULLER	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
GARDNER Anne	N/A	1647	Lynched for witchcraft.	SuRO, C8/4/7, f.74.

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
GOODFELLOW Anne	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.31.
GREEN Alice	N/A	1748	Swum for witchcraft.	SuRO, MS 4413/3, f.7.
GREENLIEFE Ellen	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.28.
GURREY Elizabeth	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.31.
HAMMER Anne	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.31.
HEMPSTEAD Nicholas	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.18.
HUBBARD Elizabeth	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.26.
LAKELAND Maria	Burnt	1645	Bewitched victims to death, including her husband, with her familiars.	SuRO, C8/4/7, f.72.
LIMSTEAD Jane	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
LOWES John	Hang.	1645	Sunk a ship by witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
MANNERS Susan	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
MARSH	N/A	C.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.44.
MORRIS Rebecca	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
ORVIS Old mother	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.53.
PARKER Rose	Acquit.	1645	Bewitched victim to death.	SuRO, C8/4/7.
PAYNE William	N/A	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	SuRO, B105/2/1.
RANDALL Anne	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.22.
RATCLIFFE Thomazine	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.22.
RICHMOND	N/A	C.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.30.

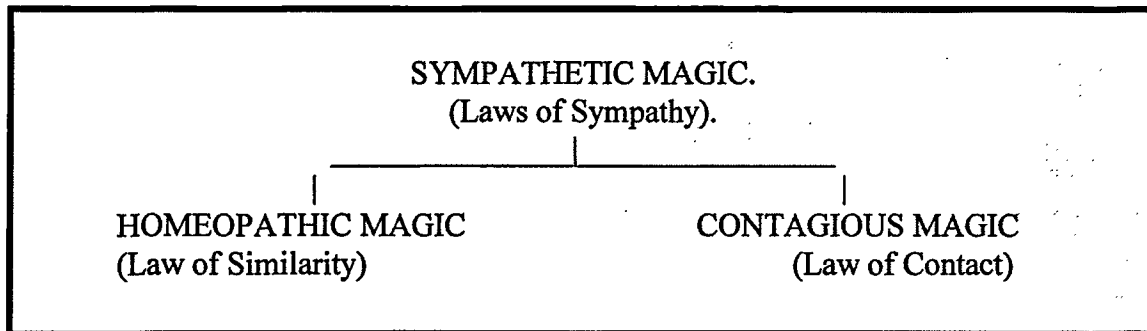
<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
RIVET Jane	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
RUCELUVER Joane	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.27.
SCARFE John	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.33.
SKIPPER Mary	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
SMITH Mary	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
SPARHAM Margery	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
SPINLOW Sarah	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
SUFFUMS Alexander	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.36.
TEOLEY, Katherine	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
WRIGHT Alice	N/A	c.1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Stearne, p.26.
WRIGHT Anne	Hang.	1645	Accused of witchcraft.	TT E 301 (3).
SUSSEX				
BRUFF Martha		1645	Accused of witchcraft.	Ewen, p.284.
HOWSELL Anne		1645	See BRUFF Martha.	Ewen, p.284.
WORCESTERSHIRE				
HUXLEY Catherine	Hang.	1652	Bewitched a girl (fits).	Baxter, p.45.
ROBINSON, Widow	N/A	1660N/A	Accused of witchcraft and keeping familiars.	Townsend, pp.40-1.
WILTSHIRE				
BODENHAM Anne	Hang.	1653	Bewitched a girl (fits) and performed incantations.	TT E 705 (24).
ELGER Alice	N/A	c.1640s	Accused of witchcraft.	Gent.Mag., 102 (1832), p.408.
ORCHARD Widow	Hang.	c.1640s	Bewitched a young girl (contortions).	Gent.Mag., 102 (1832), pp.408-10.

<u>WITCH</u>	<u>RESULT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CIRCUMSTANCES</u>	<u>REF.</u>
TILLING Ann	N/A	1685	Bewitched a boy (fits).	Gent.Mag. 102 (1832), pp.489-92.

APPENDIX 2

Sympathetic Magic

There are two fundamental tenets: first, that like produces like; second, that things that were once in contact continue to exert an influence on each other even after such contact has been severed. This was characterised in 1922 by Sir James Frazer as the 'Law of Similarity' and the 'Law of Contact or Contagion' respectively. From the first the magician infers he can produce a desired effect merely by imitating it; and from the second, he infers that whatever he does to a material object will equally affect the person with whom the object was once in contact. These effects can be tabulated as follows:

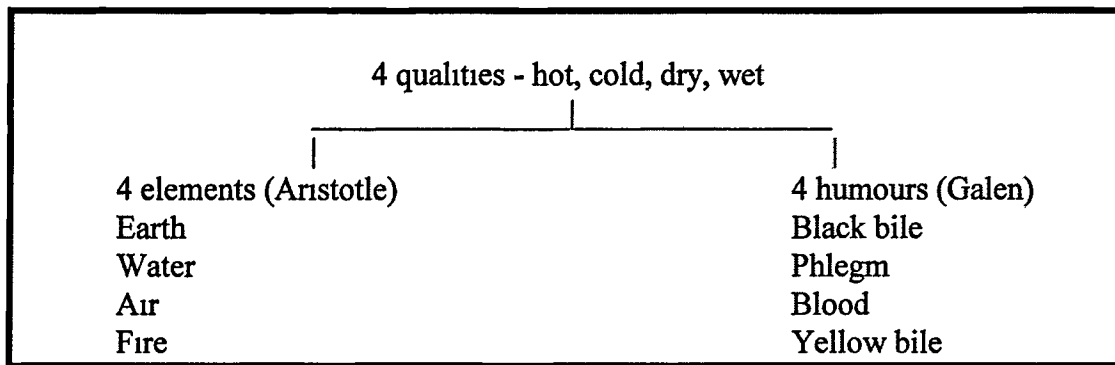


Of the Homeopathic type of magic the most common practical manifestation of this would be the making of an image representing the person whom one wished to harm. This was done in the belief that as the image was damaged or injured, so too would the man whom it represented suffer. Of the second type of sympathetic magic - Contagious Magic - the most familiar example is the magical sympathy believed to exist between a man and any severed part of his body, such as his hair, nails, or even his urine or faeces. Perhaps the best example of this is when such magic is combined with homeopathic principles and the image constructed of the person whom one wished to harm contained either the hair or nail pairings of the victim. Other parts of the body, such as the teeth could also be used, as could the clothing of the victim.

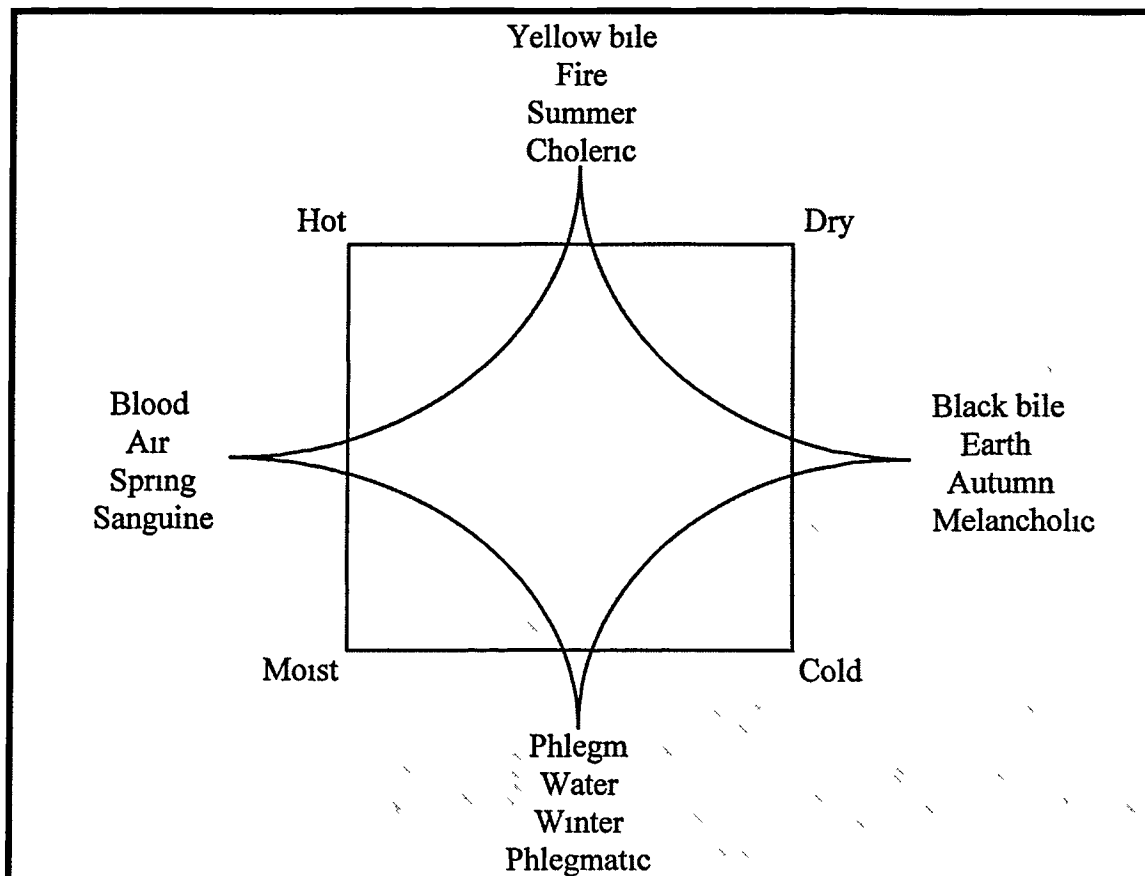
APPENDIX 3

The Humoural System Of Medicine

During the seventeenth century official healing conformed very closely to primitive beliefs concerning sympathy and antipathy. As a result the basic principles used by astrologers, herbalists, cunning folk, witches and physicians were remarkably similar. All operated on the principle that 'like caused like'. Official medical practice was still dominated by Galenic principles, which had assimilated Hippocratic with Aristotelian ideas. From the Aristotelian belief in the four elements, made up of the four qualities (hot, cold, dry, wet), was derived the Galenic view of the body being affected by four humours which had to remain in balance in order to achieve good health.



People suffered from illness because this balance became upset. In addition it was believed that the humours were linked to the seasons, just as the elements were. Thus in any particular season one humour would predominate. If one became ill, the treatment consisted of applying the opposite quality (Allopathic). If one was suffering from a hot fever, for example, one would be cooled. This relationship between the elements, qualities, seasons and humours is shown below.



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- 1.2 Printed collections of manuscripts.
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nb. For ease of reference anonymous printed primary sources contain British Library class marks.

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A true and certaine relationship of a Strange Birth, which was born at Stonehouse, In the Parish of Plymouth, The 20th of October, 1635. Together with notes of a Sermon, preached October 23, 1635 in the Church of Plymouth, at the Interning of the said Birth (London, 1635). Repr. in Hindley, C., ed., *The Old Book Collection Miscellany*, 3 vols., v.2 (London, 1872). Ref. BL 2324.g.8.

1639

A Certaine relation of the hog-faced Gentlewoman called Mistriss Tannakin Skinker, who was born at Wickham a Neutr towne between the Emperour and the Hollander, situate on the river Rhyne. Who was bewitched in her mothers wombe in the year 1618. and hath lived ever since unknowne in this kind to any, but her parents and a few other neighbours. And can never

recover her true shape, tell she be married, &c. (London, 1640), repr. in Ashbee, E. W., *Occasional Fac-simile reprints* (London, 1868).

The two inseparable brothers. Or a true and strange description of a gentleman (an Italian by birth) about seventeen yeeres of age, who hath an imperfect (yet living) brother, growing out of his side, having a head, two armes, and one leg, all perfectly to be seen. They were both baptized together: the imperfect is called John Baptist, and the other Lazurus. Admire the Creator in his creatures (London, c. 1639). Repr. in Rollins, H. E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).

1641

A new play called Canturburie his change of diet. Which showeth variety of wit and mirth: privately acted neere the Palace-yard at Westminster, (London, 1641). Ref. BL TT E 177 (8).

A relation of a strange apparition in an ale-house next doore to the White Horse, against Somerset House in the Strand; where a company of Papists were at their exercises; as is conceived the devil in an ugly black shape disturbing them, and tearing the rugge, and scattering it in pieces up and downe the roome... (London, 1641). Ref. BL TT E 180 (19).

Archy's Dream, sometimes Jester to his Majestie: but exiled the Court by Canturburies malice. With a relation for whom an odde chaire stood voide in Hell (London, 1641). repr. in Ashbee, E. W., *Occasional Fac-simile reprints* (London, 1868).

Murther, Murther, or, a bloody relation of how Anne Hampton dwelling in Westminster nigh London, by poyson murdered her deare husband, Sept. 1641. being assisted and counselled thereunto by Margaret Harwood. For which they are both committed to Gaole, and at this time wait for a tryall (London, 1641). Repr. in Hindley, C., ed., *The Old Book Collection Miscellany*, 3 vols., vol. ii (London, 1872). Ref. BL 2324.g.8.

The Atachment Examination and Confession...with a Report from Abbington towne in Barkshire, being a Relation of what harme the Thunder and Lightening did on Thursday last, upon the body of Humphrey Richardson, a rich miserable Farmer (London, 1641). Ref. E 181 (17).

The Wonderfull works of God. Declared by a strange Prophesie of a Maid, that lately lived neere Worsop in Nottinghamshire. Who dyed the 16. of November last, and being dead the space of twenty houres, did arise againe, and lived five dayes... (London, 1641). Ref. BL TT E181 (18).

1642

A great wonder in Heaven: shewing the late Apparitions and prodigious noyses of war and Battel, seen on Edge-Hill neere Keinton in Northamptonshire... (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 85 (41).

A sign from Heaven: Or, A Fearful and Terrible Noise heard in the Ayre at Albrorow in the Country of Suffolk, on Thursday the 4 day of August at 5 of the clock in the Afternoon. Wherein was heard the beating of drums, the discharging of Muskets and great Ordinance for the space of an houre and more, as will be attested by many men of good worth... (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 111 (2).

A strange and lamentable accident that happened lately at Mears Ashby in Northamptonshire. 1642. Of one Mary Wilmore, wife of John Wilmore rough Mason, who was delivered of a Childe without a head, and credibly reported to have a firme crosse on the brest, as this ensuing Story shall relate (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 113 (15).

A wonderfull and strange miracle or Gods just vengeance against the Cavaliers declaring how Mr. Andrew Stonby, a Cavalier under the command of the Lord Mohone at Listelleth in Cornwall, at the signe of the Dolphin, drunke a health to the Devil... (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 126 (36).

An exact description of Prince Ruperts malignant She-Monkey, a great Delinquent: Having approved her selfe a better servant, then his white dog called BOY... (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 90 (25).

Express Commands From both the Honourable Houses of Parliaments containing These particular Heads following...III That the abuses of Printing, be likewise Reformed, and the publishing of obnoxious matters in Pamphlets be severly punished (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 141 (3).

Observations upon Prince Ruperts dog called Boy. Carefully taken by T.B. For that purpose employed by some of quality in the City of London (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 245 (2).

The Devill turn'd Roundhead: Or, Pluto become a Brownist. Being a just comparison, how the devil is become a Roundhead? In what manner, and how zealously (like them) hi is affected with the moving of the spirit (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 136 (29).

The Divisions of the church of England crept in at XV severall doores by divers, Each having Members very earnest in the seeking to have a Church and Disipline established, as is agreeable with their religion (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 180 (11).

The Humerous Tricks and conceits of Prince Ruperts malignant she-monkey discovered to the world before her marriage. Also the manner of her marriage to a Cavalier and how within three dayes space, che salled him Cuckold to his face (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 93 (9).

The New Yeares Wonder. Being a most certaine and true Relation of the disturbed inhabitants of Kenton, And other neighbouring villages neere unto Edgehill, where the great battaile betwixt the kings army, and the Parliaments forces was fought... (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 86 (23).

The Parliaments unspotted Bitch: In answer to Prince Ruperts dog called Boy, and his malignant she-monkey (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 92 (13).

To the Kings most excellent majesty. The Humble Petition of divers hundreds of the kings poore subjects, afflicted with that grievous infirmitie, called the Kings Evill... (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 90 (6).

Two strange Prophecies, Predicting wonderfull events, to betide this years of Danger, in this clymate, whereof some have already come to passe. Well worthy of note: The one being found in the Reigne of King Edward the Fourth: The other in the Reigne of Henry the Eieghth: named Mother Shipton... (London, 1642). Ref. BL TT E 141 (2).

1643

A most certain, strange, and true Discovery of a witch. Being taken by some of the Parliament Forces, as she was standing on a small plank and sayling on it over the river of Newbury; Together with the strange and true manner of her death, with the propheticall words and speeches she used at the same time (London, 1643). Ref. BL TT E 69 (9).

*A warning-peice for ingrossers of corne, being a true relation how the Divell met with one Goodman Inglebred of Bowton, within six miles of Holgoy in Norfolk; as he was coming from Linn Market, and Bargain'd for a great quantity of Barley for eight shillings a Bushel and gave earnest; and when he came to fetch it, brought carts and horses (to their thinking) and while 'twas measuring the Divell vanished, and tore the Barne in pieces... (London, 1643). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).*

Mercurius Civicus. London Intelligencer, or, Truth impartially related from thence to the whole Kingdome, to prevent mis-information. From Thursday September 21. to Thursday September 28. 1643 (London, 1643). Ref. BL TT E. 69 (8).

The Mid-wives just Petition or, A complaint of divers good Gentlewomen of that faculty. Shewing to the whole Christian world their just cause of their suffering in these distracted times, for their want of Trading. Which said complaint they tendered to the House on Monday last, being the 23. of Jan. 1643. With some notes worthy of consideration (London, 1643). Ref. Wellcome. 36731/B.

The True Informer: continuing A collection of the most special and observable Passages, which have been informed this weeke from severall parts of his Majesties Dominions (London, 1643). Ref. BL TT E 69 (14).

Wonders foretold, by her crete Prophet of Wales, which shall certainly happen this present yeare 1643, by strange fires, and crete waters, by spirits and tivills, appearing in many places of tis kingdome, especially in and about te City of London and Westminster. And the effect that will ensue thereof (London, 1643). Ref. BL TT E 245 (34).

1645

A True and exact Relation of the severall informations, Examinations, and Confessions of the late Witches, arraigned and executed in the County of Essex. Aug. 19. 1645. (London, 1645). Ref. BL TT E296 (35).

A True Relation of the Arraignment of eigheteene Witches. That were tried, convicted, and condemned, at a Session holden at St. Edmunds-bury in Suffolke, and there by the judge and Justices of the said session condemned to die, and so were executed the 27 day of August 1645. As also a list of the names of those that were executed, and their severall confessions before their executions. With a true relation of the manner how they find them out (London, 1645). Ref. BL TT E 301 (3).

An order of the Commons Assembled in Parliament. Enabling the severall Committees in the severall counties to Examine the abuses in placing of officers in the severall hospitals in the kingdome. And likewise to provide for the maintenance of such souldiers as have been maimed in the Parliaments service, and are of the said severall Counties (London, 1645). Ref. Wellcome.25502/B.

Signes and wonders from Heaven. With a true Relation of a Monster borne in Ratcliffe Highway, at the figure of the three arrows, Mistris Bullock the Midwife delivering her thereof. Also showing how a cat kittened a monster in Lombard Street in London. Likewise a new discovery of witches in Stepney Parish. And how 20 witches more were executed in Suffolke this last Assize... (London, 1645). Ref. BL TT E 295 (2).

Strange and fearfull Newes from Plaisto in the Parish of West-Ham in the house of one Paul Fox, a silke-weaver where is dayly to be seene throwing of stones, brickbats, oyster-shells, bread etc. Ref. BL TT E 301 (12).

The Examination, confession, Triall, and Execution, of Joane Williford, Joan Cariden, and Jane Holt: who were executed at Feversham in Kent, for being Witches, on Monday the 29 of September, 1645... (London, 1645). Ref. BL TT E 303 (33).

The Lawes against Witches and conjuration. And some brief Notes and observations for the Discovery of witches. Being very usefull for these Times, wherein the Devil reignes and prevails over the soules of poor Creatures, in drawing them to that crying Sin of witchcraft. Also the confession of Mother Lakeland, who was arraigned and condemned for a witch at Ipswich in Suffolke (London, 1645). Ref. BL TT E 307 (11).

The most strange And Wonderful apperation of blood in a poole at Garraton in Leicestershire, which continued for the space of four dayes, the rednesse of the colour for the space of those four dayes every day increasing higher and higher, to the infinit amazement of many hundreds of behoulders of all degreed and conditions, who have dipped their hankerchiefs in this bloody

poole, the scarlet compexion of the linnen will be a testimoniall of this wonderfull truth to many succeeding generations... (London, 1645). Ref. BL TT E 303 (22).

1646

A Declaration of a strange and Wonderful monster: Born in Kirkham Parish in Lancashire (the Childe of Mrs Haughton, a Popish gentlewoman) the face of it upon the breast, and without a head (after the mother had wished rather to bear a childe without a heade than a Roundhead) and had curst the Parliament... (London, 1646). Ref. BL TT E 325 (20).

Five wonders seene in England ... In all which places Whereby Gods Judgements are miraculously seene upon some several Miraculous Accidents have happened to the Amazement of all those that have been eye-witnesses thereof (London, 1646). Ref. BL TT E 349 (1).

Severall Apparitions seene in the Ayre, at the Hague in Holland, upon the 21 day of May last past 1646, about one of the clocke in the Afternoone...Being verified by letters sent to divers Members of the Hon: House of Commons, and translated out of the Dutch copie... (London, 1646). Ref. BL TT E 340 (33).

The Witches of Huntingdon, Their Examination and Confession; exactly taken by his Majesties Justices of Peace for that County. Whereby will appeare how craftily and dangerously the Devill tempteth and seizeth on poore soules... (London, 1646). Ref. BL TT E 343 (10).

1647

A strange and true relation of a young woman possest with the devill. By name of Joyce Davey, dwelling at Bewdley neere Worcester. With a particular of her action, and how the evill spirit speakes within her, giving fearful answers unto those Ministers and others that come to discourse with her... (London, 1647). Ref. BL TT E 367 (4).

Crete wonders foretold by her crete prophet of Wales, which shall certainly happen this present year 1647. by strange fire and crete waters, by spirits and Tivells appearing in many places of this Kingdome, especially in and about the Cities of London and Westminster, and the effects that will follow thereupon (London, 1647), repr., Ashbee, E.W. *Occasional Fac-simile reprints* (London, 1868).

Fearful Apparitions or the Strangest visions that ever hath been heard of. It is a spirit that constantly every night haunts one Mr. Youngs yard in Lumber-street, neere to the Golden Crosse... (London, 1647). Ref. BL TT E 385 (7).

1648

The Devill and the Parliament: or, The Parliament and the Devill (London, 1648). Ref. BL TT E 443 (18).

Strange Newes from Brotherton in York-shire, being a true Relation of the raining of Wheat on Easter day last, to the great amazement of all the Inhabitants: It hath rained wheate more or less every day since, witnessed by divers persons of good ranke and quality, as the Lady Ramsden who gathered some herselfe, some of it was sent to Judge Green, and M. Horst dwelling at the Fountaine Taverne in Saint Annes Lane near Aldersgate in London (London, c. 1648). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).

1650

Teratologia: or A Discovery of Gods wonders, manifested in former and modern times by Bloudy Raine, and Waters: With other prodigious occurences, being intimations of the Divine Displeasure; but withal, most gracious Invitations to Repentance (London, 1650). Ref. BL TT E 612 (16).

Wonderful Newes from the North. Or, A true Relation of the sad and Grievous Torments, Inflicted upon the Bodies of three children of Mr. George Muchamp, late of the County of Northumberland, by Witchcraft..(London, 1650). Ref. BL TT E 618 (10).

1651

Most Fearful and strange newes from the bishopricke of Durham, Being a true relation of one Margaret of Edenbrynes, neere the River Darwent in the said Bishopricke. Who was most fearfully possessed and tormented with the Devil, as also in what ugly shape he first appeared unto her, how lamenentably she was handled with this evill spirit, and at last how wonderfully the Lord delivered her (London, 1651). Ref. BL TT E 180 (11).

Newes from the Dead. Or A True and Exact narration of the miraculous deliverance of Anne Green, who being executed at Oxford, Decemb. 14. 1650 afterwards revived, and by the care of certain physitiians there is now completely recovered (Oxford, 1651). Ref. BL 57090.

1652

A Prodigious and tragicall history of the arraignment, tryall, confession, and condemnation of six witches at Maidstone in Kent, at the assizes there held in July, Fryday 30. this present year 1652. Before the Right Honourable, Peter Warburton, one of the justices of the common pleas... (London, 1652). Ref. BL TT E 673 (19).

Mercurius Democritus, or a true and perfect nocturnall, communicating wonderful newes out of the World in the Moon...From Tuesday night Aprill 7. to Wednes. Aprill 14. 1652 (London, 1652). Ref. BL TT E 659 (25).

The Ranters Monster: Being a true relation of one Mary Adams living in Tillingham in Essex, who named herself the Virgin Mary, blasphemously affirming, that she was conceived with child by the Holy Ghost... (London, 1652). Ref. BL TT E 658 (6).

The Tryall and Examination of Mrs Joan Peterson, before the Honourable Bench, at the Sessions house in the Old Bayley, yesterday; for her supposed Witchcraft, and poysoning of the Lady Powel at Shelsey: Together with her confession at the Bar... (London, 1652). Ref. BL TT E 659 (15).

The Witch of Wapping or an exact and perfect Relation, of the life and devilish practices of Joan Peterson, that dwelt in Spruce Island, near Wapping; who was condemned for practising witch-craft, and sentenced to be hanged at Tyburn... (London, 1652). Ref. BL TT E 659 (18).

1653

Cabala, Mysteries of State, in letters of the great Ministers of K.James and K.Charles (London, 1653). Ref. BL TT E 221 (3).

Conjectura Cabbalistica.Or, a conjectural essay of interpreting the minde of Moses, according to a Threefold Cabbala: viz. literal, philosophical, mystical, or divinely moral (London, 1653). Ref. BL TT E 1462 (2).

1655

A Warning Piece for the World, or, A Watch-Word to England. Being many strange and Wonderfull Visions and Apparitions, that appeared to one Mr. William Morgan a Farmer neere the City of Hereford, and to one John Rogers his shepherd... (London, 1655). Ref. BL TT E 853 (13).

Quakers are Inchanters and dangerous Seducers. Appearing in their Inchantment of one Mary White at Wickham-skeyth in Suffolk, 1655 (London, 1655). Ref. BL 855.f.7(1).

The Quakers terrible vision; or, The Devils Progress to the City of London: Being A more true and perfect Relation of their Several Meetings, Trances, Quakings, Shakings, Roarings and Trembling Postures... (London, 1655). Ref. BL TT E 835 (10).

1658

The Snare of the Devil discovered: Or, a true and perfect Relation of the sad and deplorable condition of Lydia the wife of John Rogers House-carpenter, living in Greenbank in Pumpe alley in Wappin; how she wanting money the Devil appeared to her in the shape of a man, on Monday-night the 22nd of March last and brought the money, and caused her to cut a vein in her right hand, and a Contract was made between them... (London, 1658). Ref. BL TT E 1833 (2).

1659

Frier Bacon his Discovery of the Miracles of Art, Nature, and Magick. Faithfully translated out of Dr. Dee's own Copy, by T.M. and never before in English (London, 1659). Ref. BL TT E 1932 (1).

Stange and terrible news from Cambridge Being a true Relation of the Quakers bewitching of Mary Philips out of the bed from her husband in the Night, and transformed her into the shape of a Bay Mare, riding her from Dinton, towards the University... (London, 1659). Ref. BL 719.g.75.

The Good Angel of Stamford or an Extraordinary Cure of an extraordinary consumption, In a true and faithful Narrative of Samuel Wallas Recovered, By the Power of God, and in prescription of an Angell (London, 1659). Ref. BL TT E 999 (4).

1660

A most wonderful and sad judgement of God upon one Dorothy Matley late of Ashover in the County of Derby, within fourteen miles of the said Towne of Darby; who...sunk into the ground, to the amazement of the behoulders, and the ground closed again upon her, as here underneath it is more fully declared... (London, 1660). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927). Ref. BL 11623.g.19.

Philosopus, W.W., *Occult Physick, or the three principles in Nature Anotomized by a Philosophical operation, taken from experience, in three Books* (London, 1660).

1661

Here is a true and perfect Relation from the Faulcon at Barksides: of the strange and wonderful aperition of one Mr. Powel a Baker lately deceased, and of his appearing in severl shapes, both at Noon-day and at night... (London, 1661), repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).

Two most Strange Wonders; the one is a true relation of an angell appearing to Mr, James Wise Minister in Yorkshire and the many strange and wonderfull visions which he at that time beheld; as also his prophecies...The other Being a most fearful judgement whcih befell Dorothy Matley of Ashover in the County of Derby on Saturday the 23rd of March...1661 (London, 1661). Ref. BL TT E 1874 (4).

1662

The Divils cruelty to Mankind. Being a true Relation of the Life and Death of George Gibbs, a Sawyer by his trade, who being many times tempted by the Divill to destroy himselfe, did on Fryday being the 7th of March 1663. Most cruelly Ripp up his own Belly, and pull'd out his Bowells and Guts, and cut them in pieces: to the Amazement of all Behoulders, the sorrow of his Friends, and the great grief of his Wife, being not long married: and both young people

(London, 1662). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927). Ref. BL 11623.g.19.

Mirabilis Annus Secundus; or, the second part of the several years prodigies, Being a true additional collection of many signs and apparitions (London, 1662). Ref. BL 1104.c.13 (2).

A wonder of wonders being a true relation of the strange and invisible beating of a drum, at the house of Joh Mompesson, esquire, at Tidcome in the county of Wiltshire, being about eight of the clock at night, and continuing till four in the morning, several days one after another, to the great admiration of many persons of honour, gentlemen of quality, and many hundreds who have gone from several parts to hear this miraculous wonder, since the first time it began to beat Roundheads and Cuckolds, come dig come dig... (London, 1662). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).

1664

Natures Wonder? Or, A True account how the Wife of one John Waterman an Ostler in the Parish of Fisherton-Anger, near Salisbury, was Delivered of a strange Monster upon the 26th of October 1664 which lived until the 27th of the same Moneth. It had two Heads, foure Armes, and two legs.... (London, 1664). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).

A Warning for all such as desire to Sleep upon the Grass: By the Example of Mary Dudson Maid-servant to Mr. Phillips a Gardner, dwelling in Kent street, in the Borough of Southwark: Being a most strange but true relation how she was found in a dead sleep in the Garden, that no ordinary Noise could wake her. As also how an Adder entered into her body... (London, 1664). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).

1665

Wonder if not miracles or, A Relation of the Wonderful Performances of Valentine Gertux of Assance near Youghall in Ireland (London, 1665). Ref. BL 1856.g.15 (27).

1666

Rub for Rub; or, An answer to a physicians pamphlet, styled, The Stroker stroked (London, 1666). Ref. BL, Lutt. II 183.

Wonder no Miracles; or Mr Valentine Greatrakes gift of healing examined, upon occaion of a sad effect of his stroaking, March 7th. 1665. at one Mr. Cressets house in Charter-House Yard (London, 1666). Ref. BL 551.b.11 (3).

1676

Truth brought to light. Or wonderful strange and true newes from Gloucestershire, concerning one Mr. William Harrison, formerly Stewart to the Lady Nowel of Cambden, who was supposed to be Murthered by the Widow Perey and two of her Sons, one of whom was Servant to th said Gentleman... (London, c.1676). Repr. in Rollins, H.E., *The Pack of Autolyclous...* (Cambridge, 1927).

1678

Poor Robin's True Character of a Schold or, the Shrews looking glass. Dedicated to all: Domineering dames, wives rampart, cuckolds couchant and henpeckt sneaks (London, 1678). Repr. in Hindley, C., ed., *The Old Book Collection Miscellany*, 3 vols., v.2 (London, 1872). Ref. BL 2324.g.8.

The wonders of the little world: Or, a general history of man. In six books. Wherein by many thousands of examples is shewd what man hath been from the first ages of the world to these times. In respect of his body, senses and passions, affections: His virtues and perfections, his vices and

defects, his quality, vocation and profession; and many other particulars not reducible to any of the former heads. Collected from the writings of the most approved historians, philosophers, physicians, philologists and other (London, 1678). Ref. BL 123.h.1.

1685

Parrhesiastes, P., [anon.] *Some cursory Reflexions impartially made upon Mr. R. Baxter...* (London, 1685). Ref. BL 3187.c.53.

1696

An account of one Anne Jeffries now living in the County of Cornwall, who was fed for six months by a small sort of Airy People call'd Fairies. And of the strange and wonderfull Cures she performs with Salves and Medicines she received from them, for which she never took one penny of her Patients. In a letter from Moses Pitt to the Right Reverend Father in God Sr. Edward Fowler, Lord Bishop of Glocester (London, 1696). Ref. BL WP2367.a/74.

1725

Albertus Magnus, De Secretis mulierum: or, The Mysteries of Human Generation Fully Revealed, trans. J. Quincey (London, 1725). Ref. BL 1172.b..1(2).

1.4. Printed Works (Authored)

Ady, T., *A Candle in the dark: or, A treatise concerning the nature of witches & witchcraft: Being advice to judges, sheriffes, justices of the peace and grand-jury-men, what to do, before they passe sentence on such as are arraigned for their lives, as witches (London, 1655).*

Ambrose, I., *Ministration of and Communion with Angels (London 1653).*

Aubrey, J., *Gentilisme*, ed. Cohen, J. M., *Three Prose Works (London, 1972).*

Baxter, R., *The certainty of the world of spirits. Fully evinced by unquestionable histories of apparitions and witchcrafts, apparitions, voices &C. Proving the immortality of souls, the malice and miseries of the devils and the damned, and the blessedness of the justified (London, 1691).*

——— *Relinquiae Baxterianae (London, 1696).*

Beard, T., *Theatre of God's Judgements (London, 1631).*

Beaumont, J., *A historical, physiological and theological treatise of Spirits, Apparitions, Witchcraft, and other Magical Practises... (London, 1705).*

Behn, A., *The works of Aphra Behn*, ed., Summers, M., (London, 1915).

Bernard, R., *A guide to grand jurymen, divided into two bookes: In the first, is the authors best advise to them what to doe, before they bring in a billa vera in cases of witchcraft...In the second, is a Treatise touching Witches... (London, 1627).*

Besse, J., *A Collection of the Sufferings of the people called Quakers, For the Testimony of a good conscience (London, 1753).*

Boguet, H., *An Examen of Witches (c. 1590)*, trans. Ashwin E. A., ed. Summers, M., (London, 1929).

Bovet, R., *Pandaemonium or the Devil's Cloyster. Being a further Blow to Modern Sadduceism Proving the Existence of Witches and Spirits in a discourse deduced from the fall of angels,*

the proposition of Satans kingdom before the flood: The idolatry of the ages after, greatly advancing diabolical confederacies... (London, 1684).

Bower, E., *Doctor Lamb's Darling: or, strange and terrible Newes from Salisbury; being a true, exact, and perfect Relation, of the great and wonderful Contract and Engagement made betweene the Devil, and Mistriss Anne Bodenham...* (London, 1653).

-----*Doctor Lamb revived, or, Witchcraft condemned in Anne Bodenham A servant of his, who was Arraigned and Executed the Lent Assizes last at Salisbury, before the Right Honourable the Lord Chief Baron Wild, Judge of the Assize...* (London, 1653).

Bromhall, T., *A treatise of Spectres. Or, an history of Apparitions, oracles, prophecies and predictions, With dreams, visions, and revelations. And the Cunning Delusions of the Devil, to strengthen the idolatry of the Gentiles, and the Worshipping of the Saints departed; With the Doctrine of Purgatory. A work very reasonable for discovering the Impostures and Religious cheats of these Times. Collected out of sundry Authors of great Credit; and delivered into English from their several Originals...* (London, 1658).

Browne, T., *Religio Medici...* (London, 1659).

Bunyan, J., *The Life and Death of Mrs Badman...* (London, 1680).

Burton, R., *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1628), eds. Floyd, D. and Jordan-Smith, P. (New York, 1939).

Butler, S., *Characters and Passages from Note Books*, ed. Waller, A.R. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1908).

Calamy, E., *A brief representation and discovery of the nororious falsehood and disimulation contained in a book styled, The Gospel Way confirmed by Miracles, Published by Nicholas Ware, and Mathew Hall, for the use of the Church of Whatfield in Suffolk. Being the substance of the Informations, and free confession of Ann the wife of the above-mentioned Mathew Hall, (formerly called Anne Wells) and others, taken before Brampton Gurdon Esquire, Justice of the Peace of the County; and now (not without the same Justice his consent) set forth, for publicke satisfaction concerning the same Book* (London, 1649).

Calmet, D. A., *Dissertations upon the Apparitions of Angels, Daemons and Ghosts...* (London, 1759).

-----*Treatise on Vampires and Revenants. The Phantom World*, Leatherdale, C., ed. (Desert Island Books, 1993).

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